4: Henry M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

The Soul of an African People
The Bambara
Their Psychic, Ethical, Religious, and Social Life

/L'ame d'un peuple africain
Les Bambara
Leur vie psychique, éthique, sociale, religieuse/

By Father Joseph Henry

Münster, 1910
Bibliothèque-Anthropos, Vol. 1, No. 2

Translated from the French by Anne Coleman

Human Relations Area Files
1960

/Title Page/

Table of Contents

800

		Page
Introduction /not translated/		
Chapter 1.	Bambara Mentality.	
1.	Beliefs concerning the Forces of Nature	1
2.	Taboos	5
	Legend of theTwo Kouloubali	8
	Legend of a Branch of the Taraoulé	9
	Legend of Another Taraoulé Branch	10
	Legend of the Two Djara	10
	Legend of the Samaké	11
3.	The Gnâma	17
Chapter 2.	Animism and Its Consequences.	
1.	Beliefs about Spirits	19
2.	Sorcery and Priesthood	23
3.	Metamorphosis	29
4.	The Dja	33
Chapter 3.	The Bambara's General Ideas on Human Life.	
1.	Sickness	35
2.	Death	38
3.	The Reincarnation of Souls	48
Chapter 4.	Bambara Ideas Concerning God, Invisible Beings, and Adam and Eve.	
1.	Belief in God	53
2.	The Saraka	56
3.	The Bambara Belief in God is not of Islamic Origin Any More Than Are Their Ideas on Heaven, Hell, and the World of Invisible Beings	59
Chapter 5.	Fetishism among the Bambara: The Worship of the Gnéna. Classification of the Gnéna, Who Are Identical with the Arab Djiné.	
1.	What is Meant by Gnéna, or Djiné	81
2.	Gnéna Who Dwell in the Bush	83

ODD

3. Gnéna Who Roam the Village and Its Environs 85
4. Genie of Ponds, Springs, and Wells 88
5. Genii of the Crops 89
6. Genii Protectors of Children 90
7. The Genie Protector of Circumcised Youths 93
8. The Women's Genie 95
9. The Twins' Genie 97
10. The Genie Protector of Villages 99
11. The Koté, or Koré, Genie 104

Chapter 6. Worship, Celebrations, Saraka, Sacrifices, and Dances in Honor of the Gnéna.
1. The First Two Groups of Gnéna 107
2. The Gnéna of the Third Group: The Eight Categories of Powerful Gnéna 110
The N'tomo, The Special Children's Fetish 111
The N'golo, The Special Fetish of the Circumcised 115
The Mouso Ka Djiri, The Women's Special Fetish 116
The Sinsin, the Special Twins' Fetish 117
The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages 118
Election of the Priest 118
Choice of the Dasiri Fetish and His Sacred Mount 119
Enthronement of the Gnéna-n-sonnaba, Priest of the Dasiri and Dougoutigi, Head of the Village 120
Sacrifices Offered to the Dasiri 121
The Formula of the Sacrifice 123
The Semioccult Society of the Koré, or Koté 125

Chapter 7. The Worship of Satan, or the Worship of the Gnâ, or Boli.
1. What is Meant by Gnâ, or Boli 130
2. The Legend of the Boli 133

000

	3.	Boli Whose Power Is Slight	139
	4.	Boli Whose Power Is Great	144
	5.	Differences among the Powerful Boli	150
	6.	Talking Boli	167
		Concerning the Sirikoun	168
Chapter	8.	The First Years in the Life of a Bambara.	
	1.	Sexual Morality of the Bambara	168
	2.	Concerning Adultery and Fornication	172
		Abortion	177
	3.	The Birth of a Child	179
	4.	Tattooing	187
Chapter	9.	Circumcision in Bambara Country.	
	1.	The Importance of Circumcision	189
	2.	The Soli Si Festival, or the Vigil of the Circumcised	192
	3.	The Da Woro Festival, or the Sixth Day Festival	198
	4.	The Festival of Boloko Déou Don bo, the Coming Out of the Circumcised and the Excised; the Real Entry into Civil and Religious Life	210
Chapter	10.	Bambara Marriage.	216
	1.	The Marriage Proposal	217
	2.	The Diviners and Fetishes Accept or Reject the Suitor	219
	3.	The Betrothal	222
	4.	The Wedding of a Young Bambara Girl	226
	5.	Exhibition of the Bride's Trousseau on the Evening of the First Day	234
Chapter	11.	Bambara Burials.	
	1.	The Grave and the Cemetery	236
	2.	No Sacrifice to the Shades of the Dead	237
	3.	Respects Paid to the Uncircumcised	238
	4.	Burials of the Circumcised, Old People, Heads of Families, Married and Unmarried Persons, Pregnant Women	240

000

Burials of the First Category, Those of Old People 240
Burials of the Second Category, Those of Heads of Families 248
Burials of the Third Category, Those of Married Persons Who Are Not Heads of Families 249
Burials of the Fourth Category, Those of the Unmarried 249
Burials of Women Who Were Pregnant or Died in Childbirth 250
5. Sacrifices to Fetishes on the Occasion of a Death 251
6. Respects Paid to Initiates of the Koré, or Koté 255
7. Burial of the Excommunicated 257
8. Worship Accorded to the Dead 259

The Soul of an African People
The Bambara
Their Psychic, Ethical, Religious, and Social Life

/12/

Chapter 1

1. Beliefs Concerning the Forces of Nature

181 It would seem child's play to demonstrate to a Negro the absurdity of his prejudices and his superstitious practices; yet such a demonstration does not suceed. No matter how clear and simple your arguments may be, you will not succeed in bringing into his mind the least spark of light or the slightest doubt. The o do, "that's it," and tigné, "that's true," which spring so readily from the mouth of one whose eyes you try to open, are polite sayings, and nothing more.

There is no reason to be surprised. Being incapable of long meditation and broad reasoning, he does not grasp the illogicality of his beliefs and, the contradictions in his behavior; he believes what his fathers believed and, like them, he sacrifices, so that everything with which he comes in contact is reddened slightly with blood. Your talk at once surprises him and leaves him cold; he does not understand you or grasp what you say; he even finds you a little silly. If he does not dare to admit this feeling to himself he stops with the words: Toubabou do! (This is a white man! Can he think and judge as I myself judge?").

In addition, his beliefs are linked to one another, and if we are able to get down to his level, taking care all the while to raise him to ours, if we judge as he judges and think as he thinks, we will move from surprise to surprise, more than ever, for his conception of the world and ours are not at all the same, and his mentality and ours are different from each other.

181 811 772 Every non-Mohammedan Bambara considers himself a close relative of animals and plants and, I may add with all assurance /13/, a close relative of inanimate things. Without any doubt he distinguishes

181 the kingdoms from each other; for him a mineral is not a vegetable
811 nor a vegetable an animal. He differentiates between the animate
772 and the inanimate and does not confuse the genera and species. But has he known how to establish a definite, clear, and well-demarcated line of distinction between man and the rest of creation? No, he bases his ideas of all things on himself or, to be more definite, on what he feels and believes himself to be. In addition to genii and spirits, he sees conscious forces and energies everywhere in nature. He cannot define these forces; his ideas on the subject are confused and indefinite. But, nevertheless, it is true, that he attributes a glimmer of reason and feeling to everything. Obviously the black man does not attribute a soul -- in the sense that we understand it -- to everything; nor does he say that everything is the home of a genie or a spirit; yet he cannot conceive of pure matter. He finds instinct in animals and special virtues and properties in plants. In inert matter he encounters phenomena which he cannot explain, and since he always uses himself and his reasoning as the basis of comparisons, he endows everything with the immaterial, invisible, imperceptible attributes of reason and feeling. In his mind I repeat, matter is not a soul, or a genie as he conceives of one; yet it is a being, a force, a power that has its own existence and the ability to act of its own accord. Here are a few examples taken from a thousand:

811 In July, 1908 at the time when the crops were sprouting, cer-
731 tain regions of the Ségou circle were invaded by tiny caterpillars
782 measuring barely 0.025 meters in length. They were a beautiful
825 velvety black with pale green lines on their sides; they came from the east out of no one knows where and myriads of them proceeded toward the west in serried ranks. Wherever they passed everything was eaten, and the eleusine /African millet/, corn, and sorghum had to be resown.

While these creatures were devouring the crops, the Moslem cried his insignificant formula toward the east and repeated, "God is great." He prostrated himself, crouched on his heels, devoutly shaking his forefinger, but all was in vain, for the quivering black wave continued to draw back on itself, to hump its back, and then to grow longer /14/; it continued to advance and to grow. The pagan

211 whitened the front of his dwelling with a mixture of millet flour and
131 water that had been offered to the shades of his ancestors, and poured
182 chicken blood here and there; then he thought it best to meet in
825 council and consult his sorcerers. The same orders were given everywhere: a potentate, perhaps a prince, doubtless of the caterpillar people, was celebrating his wedding and respects must be paid to him. All the pagan villages did so, and the marriage of the caterpillars took place one fine morning at daybreak. Two or three caterpillars were placed at the bottom of old worn-out gourds and carried far up a path on the west side and out of the village by a procession of women and girls, singing and dancing, and preceded by furiously beating drums. They placed the little creatures on a spot determined by the elders and, after a wild dance they made their farewells, foolish farewells, stupid perhaps and yet nevertheless touching. For if the young people called to them with a long burst of laughter: "I na somaon fo (you will greet your people)," and some old shrews in a tone of command cried: "Ta so! (Go home!)," there were more who said to them: "Toumouni (little caterpillar), an bi déli (we implore you) have pity on us, go back now to your kingdoms; everything is eaten, and there is nothing left. Go, bring greetings to the people of your family, greet them all and greet them well."

They continued to come through for at least eight days, but their number decreased and a storm came and swept them away. Every Bambara will tell you that these caterpillars do not talk, that they have no soul. And yet if you try to make him understand that he has rendered them futile, useless, childish honors and that they could neither enjoy his music and songs nor understand his prayers and supplications, he will shrug his shoulders: "Tigné o (you are right)," he will tell you with a mocking air, and cutting your talk short will add: "Ou tara!", and one who knows the Bambara will guess the full implication: "Nevertheless, they left."

In August, 1908 a large part of the population of the villages
825 located in the environs of Ségou spent the day of Friday the twenty-
787 eighth in sweet idleness. Since I knew that a Kono fetish brought by its masters to recruit initiates was going from village /15/ to

825 787 [262] village, I thought at first that here lay the reason for this rest, extraordinary during the time of the most intensive hoeing. Not at all; the pagan Bambara were resting, and the women were giving their husbands and children dégé (millet flour mixed with milk and honey water) in obedience to a hyena's command. The hyena, it was said -- and all the sorcerers confirmed this -- had emerged from its dumbness, its tongue had been loosed, and it had predicted to the people of the west that a plague even more terrible than that of the caterpillars would descend on the country. Only one means to avert it remained: to refrain from going to the fields on Friday and to treat themselves to dégé, the food so dear to Moslems.

482 757 824 784 On my excursions I have often met men and women carrying on their heads a gourd or a basket containing a handful of leaves or some bundles of roots, and apart from the customary greetings it has been impossible for me to get a word out of them. And why this silence? They were carrying a medicinal plant, a remedy which would lose all its virtue and all its efficacy if they conversed on the way, and they had to take care not to trample such-and-such a plant that grew on the edge of the path.

757 753 784 The Bambara quite readily names the plants and herbs whose curative powers are known to him, and yet in the presence of a sick person he will very seldom give you the name of the remedy the latter is taking, or the names of the roots and leaves that make up his poultices. Sickness, he believes is a force, a power which tortures our bodies. He is afraid that in naming the remedy he would provide this power with a weapon against its healing virtue, which is another force or power. He sets the second power against the first to make it leave.

811 784 It is evident that he attributes bits of reason and emotion to everything, that he attributes human feelings to all that is animate and inanimate. The "taboos" are not merely one piece of evidence of this, they are an irrefutable proof of this attitude.

2. Taboos

614 825 784 /16/ The Bambara people are divided into several families or lineages each of which bears a special name, or diamou, and sees at its head certain plants or animals as protectors and patrons. The Djara lineage claims kinship with the lion, the kana, or iguana (1), the

[136]

1. A kind of large lizard resembling a small alligator. It lives on river banks and near ponds, and though it prefers the land and climbs trees, it likes to play in the water. The French commonly call it gueule tapée /"smart jaw"/.

boumou, or dondol; the Dambélé with a large black monkey called Ngoha; the Tankara with a spiney silk-cotton tree, the dondol; the Kouloubali with the wild pig /biche cochon?/, the Mpolio (2), and

2. A slimy and spined fish.

the panther. There is not a lineage that does not have one or even several tné, or taboos. As will be seen below, lineages of the same name often regard themselves as bound by a tie of fraternity and friendship, while a difference in the tné shows, that a division occurred at some particular time.

Europeans, churchmen, military men, and civilians, usually call the Bambara tné "totems." Since Long, the one to speak first of "totemism" and "totems," this question has been treated at length by serious and distinguished authors, by competent authorities. Their definitions cannot be applied to the Bambara tné. Striking as is the resemblance of some of them to the totems of the Redskins and the Australians, I cannot apply to them the definition given by Nicolay in speaking of the Redskins: "The Redskins also believe in the existence of spirits peculiar to individuals (as fetishes are to Africans) and which, in animal form, bear the names of totems." (3) The

614
B5
784

3. /Fernand/ Nicolay, /Curiosités des lois et coutumes./ Histoire des croyances, /superstitions,/ moeurs, /usages et/ coutumes /(selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. The History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Manners, Ways, and Customs (according to the outline of the Decalogue)/. / Vol. 1, Book 1, Chap. 1. /Paris, 1901.?

Bambara tné are completely different from fetishes and have nothing in common with the latter. In a chapter (1901, p. 61) of his work, "myths, cultes et religions /Myths, Cults, and Religions/, A. Lang defines totemism for us thus: " The word "totemism" or "totamism" was applied for the first time by Long...: to the customs of the Indians.. which acknowledges kinship with animals.... Totemists spare animals which are of their flesh and blood...." According to A. Lang, the Redskins and Australians believe themselves to be truly and physically related to the animal-totem, and they number among their grandparents /17/ a doe, a toad, an ant, a rabbit, etc. All actual physical kinship is of course communicated by means of blood, and two beings who have in their veins the blood of the same individual are related. In order to be of the same flesh and blood as their totems, the Redskins and Australians thus believe themselves to be actual sons of an ancestor who formerly was a doe, toad, ant, rabbit.... In Chapter II of his work Histoire des croyances, moeurs et coutumes, Nicolay gives one to understand that the Redskins believe that at the moment of death the spirit of their ancestor found shelter in the body of the animal which serves as totem; is it possible that Lang, who is silent on this point, is unaware of Indian beliefs in metamorphosis and metempsychosis? He does not report the fact anywhere in his work Myths, cultes et religions, but whatever hypothesis one may make on this point, the fact remains that according to him Indian beliefs imply a real physical kinship. If one assumes that the first ancestors of the Indian were changed or metamorphosed at some

614 825 784 given moment into a doe, toad, ant, or rabbit -- a singular evolution if ever there was one, one may suppose that at the moment of the metamorphosis these animals did not exist and they are all, men and animals, of the same flesh and the same blood; or, more plausibly, the ancestors changed themselves into already existing animals, procreating among them does, toads, ants, or rabbits as they had formerly reproduced human beings, so that in killing one of these totem animals a Redskin must always be afraid that he is killing a son or grandson of the ancestor, or some other of the latter's descendants, and therefore of his own flesh and blood (1).

1. /sic/ A. Lang does not seem to doubt that the people of whom he speaks -- Redskins, Tahitians, and Africans -- give a very broad meaning to the words "father," "mother," "brother," "wife," "son," and that they customarily use them to refer to persons with whom they have no bond of kinship.

[ST] There is nothing like this for a Bambara. To call someone a wild animal is in his eyes an insult, and to call a man the son of a dog (ɔulou den) is enough to make him angry, to throw him into a fit of anger; even if he has a dog for a mé, that is a wrong which will sooner or later be avenged. He does not number among his ancestors a dog, or a panther, a lion or a snake. A Kouloubali would be much surprised to learn that a doe gave birth to him, and there is not a Tankara who thinks he has /18/ the sap of the dondol or the juice of its fruit in his veins. When a Djara calls himself the son of a lion, or a Dambélé the son of a big black monkey, what they say must be understood in a very broad sense, as an analogy. We ourselves say of a special benefactor: "He is my father," "he is my mother," "he is my all."

171 614 825 784 Here the Bambara is akin to the Christian Quichés of Guatemala of whom D. G. Brinton speaks in his "Nagualism," 1294, -- O. Stoll

171 614 823 784

in his Die Ethnologie der Indianerstämme von Guatemala /The Ethnology of the Indian Tribes of Guatemala/, Leyden, 1882. This work is cited by Lang in Chap. III of Mythes, cultes et religions. His tné is a friend, a protector, and may be defined as follows: it is an animate or inanimate being entitled to the respect and veneration of an entire lineage, family, or clan, in recognition of an outstanding service which has prevented the lineage, family, or clan from disappearing or becoming extinct, or has preserved them from a misfortune.

773 614 539 784 825

Every tne has its legend. Although in the mouth of the black man the tale may be embellished and decorated a little so that it varies somewhat, the substance remains the same. I will translate a few of these legends, preserving both their form and their substance.

Legend of the Two Kouloubali

The people were at war; everywhere there were only fugitives. The Kouloubali lineage had been cruelly stricken and reduced to two members, two brothers lost in the bush with their wives and children. The elder who followed /sic/ his brother at a distance, (since for fear of being surprised, they avoided camping in the same place). He arrived at the bank of a swollen river and saw he could not cross, there being no boats. "Where can I flee now?" he lamented. "I am in the hands of my enemies! For me and my family it is death or slavery." A mpolio was passing by; it heard, was touched by compassion, and, raising its big, bearded head out of the water, called to him: "I can take you over, have no fear!" The elder of the Kouloubali and his family, with their weapons and baggage, settled themselves on the slimy back of the strange fish and crossed the river. Then he said to the fish: "Listen, good mpolio, my brother and his family are over there on the bank. Do not render them the /19/ service that you rendered me, for he is an ingrate, one without a heart, and he might kill you." -- "Kill me? Come now!" and the fish dove, disappeared, and emerged far over near the other bank, at the moment when the young Kouloubali was wondering how his older brother had been able to cross such a wide

773 and deep river when there were no boats. "It is thanks to me," said
614 the mpolio, "place yourself on my spine as he did." And so the
539 younger brother and his wives crossed the river.
784 The young Kouloubali was heartless. When the women had put
825 down their gourds and baskets on the bank, at the moment when the mpolio leaped up and raised the full height of its body out of the water in order to dive and disappear, he threw his spear at it. The fish struggled for an instant, the water foamed, reddened, and then there was quiet: it was dead.

The family of the young Kouloubali cut up the animal and, without shame or remorse, invited the family of the elder brother to come to the feast. "Eat the mpolio," cried the latter, "never! And may there be a curse on any of mine that dares to eat it." Since that day, the mpolio has been the tné of the descendants of the elder Kouloubali.

To some extent it is also the tné of the descendants of the younger brother, but they eat it except for the head.

Legend of a Branch of the Taraoulé

A woman saw all her children die, and so she trembled for her last born, a sickly, puny little boy whom her milk did not help. One day she was alone in her hut crouched on her mat with the child on her knees, spinning cotton when she began to cry and moan: "You will not live, you will join your elder brothers, you will go away and leave me alone." A spitting snake was passing by; he came in and gently coiled himself around the body of the child. The mother let out a cry, and the neighbors came running.... The snake slowly uncoiled and left the dwelling while the child held his arms out to it and smiled. He did not die but became strong and healthy, for the snake had drunk all the gnâma, all elements of illness that were in him. From that day on the Taraoulé branch of which this child is the father does not eat the spitting snake, or n'gorono, for the curse of the ancestor would descend on them: that is, the spitting snake is their tné. /20/

7

Legend of Another Taraoulé Branch

T13
614
539
784
825

A woman was fetching wood in the forest when she was seized with the pains of childbirth. "All alone, what will become of me?" she cried. "I have no one to help me; who will wash my child? Oh! I will take a corpse home with me." She knelt by her load of wood, gave birth to her child, collapsed, and lost consciousness. A big black monkey was munching fruit in a near-by tree; it saw her and was moved.... It played midwife, washed the little creature, rocked him in its arms, and when the mother came to herself it gave her back her little boy. From that day on no descendant of this Taraoulé branch eats ngoba; this big black monkey is their tné, and the ancestor would curse anyone who did so.

Legend of the Two Djara

Two Djara brothers with wives and children were fleeing before their enemies. Overcome with fatigue they sat down in the shade of a dondol determined to go no farther. Actually, they were so plagued by thirst that they could not go on. An iguana was wandering in the vicinity; it had pity on the two Djara, so it climbed the dondol and, working with its tail and feet, succeeded in producing a gentle dew under the tree. All were able to quench their thirst with the sap held in the calyxes of this tree's blossoms. "The kana (iguana) shall from now on be my tné," said the elder, "and I curse any one of my descendants who kills or eats it." -- "Think it over," said the younger, "is it not to the dondol that we owe our lives? Is it not its sap that quenched our thirst? Would it not be better to take this tree as tné?" The two Djara argued, could never agree, and separated. The kana became the tné of the older branch, and the boumou, or dondol, that of the younger branch.

Legend of the Samaké

773
614
539
784
825 My grandfather has often told it to me; he himself got it from his ancestors.... A Samaké -- I cannot tell whether he had been fording the river or driving the stakes to which fishing mats are fastened -- was seized by an alligator which dragged him to the depths of its den. The alligator did not kill him, /21/ for it had fed.. Leaving the unhappy man to his sad thoughts, it withdrew.... It did not go away, however, and from time to time it hit the water with its tail at the entrance of the hole, making it quite clear that there was only one way out and that this was the door. Stretched out in the ooze, the unhappy Samaké moaned: "Who will save me from those terrible claws and those powerful teeth?" An ant lion at the top of the den was watching for flies and ants in the bottom of its pit; it had pity on the man and, working with its two horns, succeeded in bringing in a ray of sunlight to revive the hopes of the Samaké. "Will I be saved?" he asked the ant lion. Two pinches of sand were the answer, and he understood. Working with both hands, he helped the ant lion; the hole grew and he was able to get through. He escaped. When the alligator re-entered its den, exhausted with hunger, it was disappointed not to find its prey there. So as not to invite the curse of their ancestor, the descendants of this Samaké respect and venerate the géré, or ant lion, and it is their tné. Other Samaké have the elephant (sama) for their tné.

773
825
811
772 These few legends are sufficient; they all show us that although the Bambara believes that the bond with the tné is simply one of fraternity, friendship, and gratitude and not a bond of real and physical kinship, he nonetheless does not fail to attribute reason and emotion to everything around him, to animals and to plants. In nature he does not find pure matter; rather he attributes human feelings in some degree to everything, and throughout he sees a force, a power, an intangible, which he does not know how to define and which thinks, loves, laments, and weeps.

582 The Bambara tné differs further from the totem of the Redskin
614 and the Australian: it creates no obstacle to marriage between lineages of the same tne or of different tne. Each man takes a wife wherever he finds her and where he thinks best, and through these alliances the lineages mingle, cross, and recross. They do not merge, however,
[557] since the husband keeps his name, or diamou, and with it his tné; he does not take that of his wife. As to the children, they have their father's tné, and his only, and it is his name, or diamou, they bear. /22/

194 The Bambara tné is nothing less than a taboo /sic/. The word itself is very vague and difficult to translate into our French language. It implies primarily a prohibitive command, an order not to do, not to act. Whenever a competent authority -- an alleged genie, such as a boli (who speaks and gives his oracles through the mouth of a herald or interpreter, the djélimac) or a priest of the genii (djiné) believed to preside over the elements, the dougoutigi (who actually does nothing without consulting his council and the sorcerers) whenever the sorcerer (the intermediary between man and the invisible world) or a priest of the shades of the ancestors' (1) --, that is, an

[596]

1. This term seems to me the most accurate. Undoubtedly, the gouatigi, or head of the family makes the sacrifices, but his position does not always correspond to what we call in French the father of the family. He is not always married; although all the family except his mother, brothers, and sisters call him m'fa, "my father," the word "father" should be taken in a very broad sense, as he is quite often only a grand-uncle, an uncle, or a cousin.

authority of a religious character, forbids eating, killing, or looking at an animal; cutting, breaking, or using an object; drinking such-

784 and-such a liquid, that animal, object, or liquid assumes a certain sacredness, and the Bambara calls it a tné. It thus conforms to the definition of a taboo that A. Lang gives us in Chapter III of his work Mythes, cults et religions, and Nicolay in Chapter II, Volume I, of his work Histoires des croyances, moeurs, coutumes also says: "To be taboo is to be marked by a religious sign."

The tné, or taboos, are legion in Bambara country. Not only does each lineage have its own, but the goua, or families, the confraternities, villages, individuals, genii, and plants also have theirs. Many are permanent in that they are perpetuated from generation to generation. Others, on the contrary, are impermanent; they pass, fall into disuse, disappear, or are dropped as soon as they become inconvenient. All depends upon the authority from which they are derived.

Taboos can be divided into five groups. There are lineage taboos, family taboos, taboos of the djiné genii and the boli genii, and finally plant taboos. I have given some legends concerning lineage taboos (see p. 8 ff.); these are permanent, passed on from generation to generation, and cannot disappear. /23/ They embody the idea of the ancestor, not in the sense that they merge and become one, but rather because the animal or plant has saved the stock by saving him. The tné have become the fathers of the Bambara in the broad sense of the word; they are, on an ancestor's name, or diamou, like armorial bearings on a shield, and a Bambara cannot rid himself of them. The ancestor has bound himself to the tné as a result of a service rendered, and his oath has made the union so close that if one disappeared the other would disappear with it -- how could one repudiate someone who is, and was, an ancestor and whose name, or diamou one bears!

784 Family taboos also have their legends and resemble those of
773 lineages. They are different, however; the service was rendered to
262 a member of the family and not to its head. In addition, the taboos are less extensive and include only a part of a species or race. To cite just one example, certain Dambélé may not buy, raise, kill, or eat a da-n-fign, or black dog, but they are not thereby prevented

from owning, killing, or eating a dog of another color; a dish of dog is even a delicacy served during orgies in honor of the fetishes Nia, Komo, Kono, Nama, etc. The dog is taboo for them, but only the black dog, and the reason is as follows: A Dambélé family was working their fields, and every noon the wife in charge of cooking brought them gruel. One fine day the cook, seeing her child asleep, laid him on the mat and left.... Hardly had she reached the field when the big black dog arrived, yapping and whining, running toward the village and coming back, and yapping and whining even more. This performance puzzled everyone, and they all dropped their hoes and followed the dog back to the village. The dwelling had been consumed by fire and was only a pile of ashes.... "My child, my child," cried the mother at once, desperate and wild with grief.... And the dog pranced around her, put its paws on her shoulders, licked her with joyful growls, and seemed to say to her: "Have no fear, I have saved him." It had in fact saved the child; seeing the fire in the dwelling, it thought of the child, took him gently in its mouth, and carried him to the hut where karité nuts were being roasted. They found him there, well and safe, sound asleep, and from that day on they took the black dog as tné; all the family respected and /24/ venerated it, and their descendants still respect and venerate it today.

Family tné sometimes become taboo for a whole village. For example, where the Dambélé of the black dog are powerful because of their number and especially through their affinal ties, members of outside lineages avoid raising these dogs or eating their flesh, out of respect for the old people and to spare the feelings of their wives and families. Little by little the custom takes root and the animal becomes a tné or taboo for everyone.

Its durability, however, is nowhere near that of a lineage taboo. A Dambélé woman married into a village where the black dog is not taboo may refrain as much as possible from eating its flesh, but she will not fear it long. Little by little the taboo is forgotten, and only a vague memory stays with her: "An dougou tné do, for the village I came from it is taboo," she may say, but it will seem to her that for her it is no longer so. As to members of outside

lineages, they usually abandon such a taboo as soon as they leave the village, and if, because of the habit they have acquired they abide by it until their death, their children give it up.

Carrying his organization into the world of invisible beings, the Bambara endows the latter also with tné, or taboos, and make these his own. Not only are the sacred woods taboo, together with all they contain, but there are also ways of acting and behaving which displease the spirits, and some animals have the capability of making them angry. When a woman comes back from the forest with her fagot of wood on her head, she must unbind it before entering the village or do so on the public square. In some places shoes are removed at the door of the entrance hut, or b'lon through which the village is entered; elsewhere the people take off their caps; and no one ever whistles in the lanes without incurring the hatred of the invisible beings. Partridges, which are numerous in the fields around the walls, must never get into the village except dead and plucked, and children who catch them in their nets never break this custom. If by mischance a partridge flies across the village and cackles in passing, all the population is in turmoil, and for three nights thereafter men, women, and children sleep under the stars. Often, /25/ depending on the oracles of the sorcerer, they even leave their homes and build them again a short distance away.

The genii called boli are the terror of women, children, and the uninitiated, who cannot touch any object used in the ritual and who may not enter their sacred woods and their sanctuaries. The boli (1) have tné, which are taboo for their owners and those that

1. The term boli denotes any evil fetish, and hence any object used by an evil spirit or demon as his dwelling. See Chap. VII, 1.

sacrifice to them, and which sometimes also become taboo for their children. One of the strangest is the tné or taboo of the Bara, which is millet beer, or d'lo. Its owner and the person sacrificing to him must avoid drinking beer if possible, and if the habit is too established

776 among them, they take a complete bath before touching the fetish
784 or sacrificing to it. Usually the tné of the boli is an animal, and the
778 whole family takes it for their own. A palm rat, succulent as it may be to a Bambara palate, will never be eaten by the owners of Bama-n-djigi and their children: it is the tné, or taboo, of the fetish.

784 I have found no tné for animals, but many trees have them, as do medicinal plants, and when these must be used for particular purposes, they must not be placed in contact with, whatever they abhor or are supposed to detest and which in the eyes of the black man is nothing less than their tné, or taboo.

Men and women, young and old, must venerate and respect their tné and those of the genii, and even children know from their earliest years that they cannot see, kill, or eat a certain animal, that they cannot touch, cut, or break a given tree or plant, without incurring either the curse of the ancestor or the anger of the genie and losing their sight.

The severity of the punishments which hang over every Black who forgets the respect due to the tné (especially to his lineage tné and those of the boli fetishes), and hence the fear of incurring them, seems at first quite tyrannical. It is not as great as one would think, however, since the Bambara is a very good casuist when his person and his interests are at stake, and all the prohibitions except those against consuming certain /26/ meats and certain drinks are but a game.

For example, a Dambelé who sees a band of black monkeys ruining his fields and stealing his crops does nothing to stop his dogs from chasing them, and if a friend of an outside lineage comes to help and shoots them, he will have no regrets. A greater confidence is shown by a Djara when a lion ravages his herds: he goes to meet it and begs it to go away, which, according to the Black it always does.

784 When the carcass of a taboo /sic/ is found by one of the people
766 of the lineage which it protects, it usually receives the honors of burial. The Djara, whose tné is the lion, even perform the burial with ceremony: the women weep, the drums beat, and the men offer the lion a piece of cloth, in which it is rolled before being put in the grave.

784 One might perhaps think that it would be very difficult not to
602 see one's tné....? In the Sudan good manners require that people
576 discipline their glances from their earliest years. A son-in-law lowers his eyes in the presence of his mother-in-law, a daughter-in-law turns her back at a three-quarters angle out of modesty in the presence of her father-in-law, and when a lover goes to win over the father of his fiancée, she runs away and hides. Any Negro, however poor his manners, will direct his look no one knows where, into space or upon his toes, every time he greets anyone and hears his news, and will chat with a person for a quarter hour without ever looking at him. No more is asked for the tné. Undoubtedly a Bambara shields himself with both hands in its presence... and he plays the young daughter-in-law; he knows well how to differentiate between seeing and looking, and he knows how to tell you at the time, however little he is accused: "Né y'a yé tigné, n'ka, nè gné tount'a la, né m'a flè. I saw it certainly, but I did not leave my eyes on it, I did not look at it."

3. The Gnâma

789 The tné are rendered sacred, above all, by the curse of the
778 ancestor. Nothing is so much feared by the Bambara. To be cursed,
626 and cursed by his father, is the greatest evil that can befall a man; his wives would run away from him, his children would blush to call him "father," his /27/ friends would abandon him, the people of the village would be terrified to speak to him; he would have to flee. And where would he go? The gnâma of his father, of his ancestor, of his fetish's tné, would cling to his steps and follow him everywhere. Only suffering would be left for him; sickness, hunger, poverty, and humiliation would be his lot and, rejected by humanity, he would die in despair.

789 The word gnâma is very difficult to translate. Does its equivalent
778 exist in our French language? Gnâma is a force, a power, or also perhaps a /kind of/ energy, a fluid possessed by every man, every animal, every living being; it never disappears and continues to exist even

789 after death. This energy, this fluid, is the envoy, messenger, or
778 emissary of hatred, vengeance, and justice, and it goes wherever it is sent by the will which is its director and master; it goes wrongly or rightly to bring misfortune, poverty, sickness, and death. The word gnâma is constantly heard from Bambara lips.

789 The song of young girls who have been excised begins with
778 these words:

Bo n' yé, gnâma, o gnâma, bo n' yé!
304 Go away from me, gnâma, oh, gnâma, go away from me!
539 Dankoun bâ la
(i.e., Gnâma who dwell) at the great corner of land formed by two paths that cross.
Gnâma fambali, bo n' yé!
Gnama who kill, go away from me! (1)

1. Translation: "Go away from me, all kinds of gnâma, who dwell at the big dankoun (a corner of land formed by two paths that fork, intersect, or cross at the exit from the village)! Gnâma who kill, go away from me!"

789 The ears of those who consult sorcerers have had their fill of
778 this word: Gnâma djougou bi é nofé. A malicious gnâma is chasing you, so avoid this and that, kill a goat, a chicken, or a dog, place a gift of cowrie shells, a kola nut, etc... in a certain place. Nonté i fa gnâma na ouli i la, otherwise the gnâma, the avenging force possessed by your father, will rise up against you.

Always, the word gnâma carries this meaning of a force, a power, a fluid that causes sickness, suffering, and death. The following proverb alone expresses much of its meaning: Ni warani-n-kala ko, /28/ ka fa, gnâma si dé t'o la. If the panther (a tyrant as wicked as a panther) says, "Let us kill him," we surely have no gnâma to set against him (no force or energy that we might set against him as a counterbalance to the force of his gnâma).

789 778 825 753 Animals also have gnâma, and the gnâma of birds are among those most feared. By preference, they attack little children, who die in convulsions as a result; it is impossible to mistake the cause of their illness and death, since the hands and feet of the child curl up like a bird's claws. Birds are thought to be especially wicked in winter time, undoubtedly because they nest, find plenty of food, and [751] are big, fat, and vigorous. During that season mothers tie around the necks of nursing infants a string that has nine knots in it, which places them under the protection of their gnâma. Birds keep their gnâma even when dead, and I remember that in November or December, 1907, all the village of Songhobougou attributed a small influenza epidemic to the death of a big black bird (the djougo), which a European killed in one of their fields. "We have pains in our kidneys, we have pains in our throats, and we cough," they said dismally, "and the hunter is to blame for it all. Toubabou ko tɛ́ vva? A ye djougo do fa en ka forola, djougo gnâma do.... It is the European's fault, he killed a djougo in our fields and we are weighed down with gnâma." /29/

Chapter 2

Animism and Its Consequences

1. The Beliefs about Spirits

776 The Bambara has not deified the forces of nature. Although in some instances he shows them respect and fears them, he leaves them without priest, /sacrificial/ victim, or altar; he is not a "nature worshipper" in the strict sense of the word; his true religion is animism. His spiritualism knows no bounds and he sees genii just about everywhere. The bush is full of these spirits; they lodge in the trees or lounge astride branches; they run around the outskirts of villages; splash in ponds and wells; they pull themselves onto high rocks,

776 termite nests, and mounds, and like very much to crouch in the corners formed by paths that fork or intersect. Inside the villages there are also those that roll in the ashes of the hearth and stir the fire, while others watch over the household utensils -- pots, gourds, plates, and all the kitchen implements. The b'lon (vestibules or entrance huts) through which a village or a dwelling is entered are nests of genii. Individual homes are definitely not private, either; all the horns, rags, pieces of wood, and gourds, dusty and black with smoke, that are piously hung over the doors, on the beams that support the flat terrace roofs, on the walls, and pretty much everywhere, are dwellings of genii, or votive offerings in honor of those who fly in the air or run through the outbuildings.

The Bambara has not been able to rise to the conception of a complete immateriality. Although he attributes some invisible, intangible quality to everything, /30/ he also attributes to everything some material aspect or body. He thus arrives at the strangest ideas, since his imagination carries him toward the world of spirits or genii. These, with whatever name they are invested, dress in clothes and collect gold and silver, have sex and procreate; they are also seized by the lowest, vilest, and most contemptible passions. They are jealous, hateful, and intemperate, and they do evil for pleasure. The Black very seldom shows them as good, compassionate, or merciful. The life they lead is not in the least edifying; they go from orgy to orgy and are constantly fighting among themselves.

One might say that the genii are terrible tyrants, always ready to pounce on poor humanity. They are not all equally powerful or equally wicked. The Bambara divides them into two quite distinct groups: those who can directly grant a favor and, if they wish, do good; and those who can only do evil, although they can refrain from it. He makes the same petitions and uses the same words in sacrificing to both, but the words have a different meaning. When said to the first group, the words "give us rain, wives, children, prosperity," are a direct request; the words become an indirect request when addressed to spirits of the second group. In the latter case they mean "do nothing to deprive us of rain, wives, children, or prosperity."

776 In a word, "if you must work your wickedness on someone or on something, let it not be on our persons or on what belongs to us."

The spirits of the first group are gnéna (1), better known under

> 1. Women and also children often refer to both the djiné and the boli under the generic term gnena, and in the presence of the uninitiated, initiates use these words without making any distinction. It is nonetheless true that the word gnéna denotes a genie called djiné, and the word gnâ a genie called boli.

the name of djiné (Arabic word الجن imported by the Moslems), and those of the second are gnâ, or boli.

As conceived of by a black man, the gnéna, or djiné, are not strictly speaking angels; they are beings intermediate between angels and men. Not only do they eat, drink, procreate, pursue well-being and wealth, they are also /31/ subject to the physical and mental suffering that afflicts human beings, and can die as the victims of the hate, vengeance, or wickedness of a stronger being. Their priests 793 are the gnéna-n-sonna or dougoutigi (village chiefs whose jurisdiction 782 is religious and often also civil), and the sacrifices which are offered to them are addressed indirectly and in a very vague and very confused way to a Supreme Being. This vagueness and confusion is apparent especially at the present time, since all ideas of the Divinity are disappearing more and more every day; but it is likely that, in the beginning, God had a greater part in the honors rendered to His deputies, to those whom He appointed as guardians of the elements, dividing among them the empire of His creation.

The djiné remain subject to the authority of the Creator. They have not cast off the yoke and, wicked though they may be, they have not ceased to be good. If they wish, they can do good, protect men, and grant them favors. They punish and chastise because they are above all responsible for the welfare of humanity.

776 They are the necessary intermediaries between man and the Divinity, and since each has absolute authority in its sphere. The black man must appeal to them first of all in all his needs. Consequently, these spirits have assumed a dominant place in the Negro mind to the detriment of God.

776 829 Every djiné can appear in human form, and when it does so it wears a white skin and his appearance does not differ from that of a European. Many a time I have heard women, young girls, and children whisper behind me: "A gné dé djémé wala-wala déren! a boloou be iko djiniou ta tjoko, ne bi siran, He has white eyeballs! his arms are like those of the genii, I am afraid...." This seems strange and leads one to think that this concept developed after the arrival of white men whom, not without reason, they regard as being superior to them in every way. However, I believe that it antedates our arrival. The old Bambara who told me that Mage and Quintin, held prisoners at Segou by King Amadou (أحمدو) until the death of his father, Omar el Hadj (1), were regarded by them as djiné seemed to

1. El-Hadj-Omar, or Omar the Pilgrim, so called because he saw Mecca, was at Ségou around 1835, 1837, or 1839, sometime before the death of Tjéyolo, which occurred around 1839. See Introduction /not translated/.

me sincere, for an old legend states that during in /32/ one of their migrations the Bambara skirted a country inhabited by white men who resembled genii in every way. I might also add that white is the [822] liturgical color in formal sacrifices to the djiné; hens, goats, sheep, even kola nuts -- short of the impossible -- are white in color, undoubtedly because of the people's notion of the color of genii. When traveling Europeans ask their hospitality, they do everything possible to find a white hen to offer them; they believe that this is the way they can most honor their guests because of the color of the latter's skin. The old men think also that we French have intimate

776 contact with the genii and know their family names, or diamou; however little they may be at ease with a Frenchman they will beg him
829 to show them the place where a well should be dug, convinced that we know where live the spirits who are appointed to watch over water. Do we not bear them a certain resemblance?

776 The gnâ, or boli, also are sexed; they reproduce and found families. They are superior to the genii in power and wickedness, and, except indirectly, capable only of evil. They are at open war with God who, without taking away any of their intelligence or liberty, has condemned them tosuffer and to undergo the punishment of fire. They continually set up ambushes against the djiné to make their plans, good or evil, miscarry; they take pleasure in tormenting men, and the Bambara fears them greatly. The worship of the djiné is nothing compared to what is accorded them. Those considered most powerful have an entire retinue to serve them and to render them
[651] honors and, as will be seen later, the head tax of 3.50 francs per head is nothing compared to the sums the Blacks spend to ward off the blows of the boli and avoid their wrath.

Like the djiné, the boli appears in human form, but it is disgusting and hideous to behold. All those upon whom the favor of an appearance is bestowed are frozen with terror; the body of the boli is terrifyingly black, and its face disappears in a flame above which rise horns.

[782 In the sacrifices to the boli the liturgical colors are black and
822] red, and a white victim is never offered except in an indirect sacrifice necessitated by an offering called saraka, which is quite rare. /33/

2. Sorcery and Priesthood

152 Surrounded by spirits, by genii always seeking to harm him, a Bambara is quick to believe that he is the victim of one. This attitude contributes more than a little to give him a certain endurance manifested in the face of suffering. I would even say that he usually bears suffering, not with stoicism but with the torpor of an animal.

152 After all, what can one do about an evil that cannot be exorcised except to bear it? What can one do against a powerful being that cannot be disarmed? Nevertheless, in the depth of his being he feels a need to enjoy himself (and enjoyment for him consists in drinking, eating, sleeping, and procreating); therefore he feels a horror of all suffering and neglects nothing that can protect him from it. In order 757 to live in peace, he reddens everything a little with blood and covers 789 his body with grigris or good-luck charms, with talismans that change the course of things and even of nature, and lastly amulets which will forearm him against poison, help him avoid an accident, cause the sorcery of the malicious to miscarry, send away the gnâma of the genii, of the living and the dead, and prevent the unknown forces which are found more or less everywhere in nature from taking hold of the wearer. For this protection they address themselves to the priests of the djiné and the boli, and especially to the sorcerers who have close contacts with the genii and are the mediators between man and the entire invisible world.

776 Since the Bambara conceived the visible and invisible world as 782 similar to what he believes himself to be, he has come to believe quite naturally and without any effort that the genii can be seen and conversed with their language understood and, finally, that it is possible to subjugate the forces of nature and hold them in one's power. By making offerings and sacrifices or causing them to be made through the intermediary of a priest, he can win a spirit's favor and thus lessen his fears and terrors. But if the spirit is weak, they will be ready to withdraw their attentions; it must be equal to the one feared and if possible outdo it.

778 It is force, or, to use their term, fanga, that governs each 791 person's conduct toward his neighbor; to be obeyed, a man must first cause himself to be feared, and only a powerful man will succeed and see everything yield before him. /34/

The Negroes have seen people of low birth and poor family succeed in increasing their property and become rich to the point of where they have servants and slaves and dominate a whole village, a whole tribe, or a whole people. Since they like to reason from

comparisons with themselves, they have thought that certain individuals could also create understandings in the world of spirits, and thus become the spirits' equals and even command them and make them obey. They firmly believe that such is the case, and although there are many sorcerers, there are still more people who maneuver to attain this position. Possession of the occult sciences cannot be acquired by anyone who wishes, however. The diploma or certificate of competence, cannot be obtained without swallowing certain mixtures of ashes, intestines, and blood, and certain repulsive eyewashes, such as the rheum from dogs' eyes, must be slid under the eyelids in order to see the invisible beings. In addition, unless a man is initiated by his father or brother, he must expect to pay a goodly sum. This is an art that pays, and generously! Every aspirant must also have a good memory in order to engrave in his mind the formulas, gestures, and rites; only the intelligent succeed.

The competence of sorcerers is far from equal, nor do they proceed in an identical manner. Some read the future and discover secrets in the entrails of hens; others play with knuckle bones, pebbles, or cowrie shells (1) which they throw on the ground and count and

[436]

1. /Torn page/ white /shells/ used as money.

recount, or trace cabalistic signs on scattered ashes, moving the forefinger back and forth, as in a game of Goose /a game played with dice on a board/. Some work with a gourd three quarters full of water, which they set on a n'gô (a kind of napkin ring or bracelet made of braided roots) washed frequently in the blood of /sacrificial/ victims. This procedure is the least complicated. The gourd is tipped right and left, forward and backward, until it sits firmly on the n'gô and can no longer be moved without carrying the stand along. Then the operator need only flick it three times with the middle finger of the right hand while stating the petitions..., and the spirit will answer in a soft murmur which those present can hear, but which he alone understands. In a word, the /35/ good sorcerer stands out above the

791 rest of his fellows by intelligence, trickery, and deceit; the fool who vegetates is hardly patronized, for the crowd goes to the one who is craftiest, and if he is a diplomat and knows how to contrive matters to suit the occasion, he wins great fame quickly. Even while remaining a specialist (all sorcerers are to some extent), such a man is not slow to expand and, not satisfied with predicting the future, he plays the part in turn, of a doctor, a veterinary, and a pharmacist, and not a day passes when he does not find a new recipe to make his love philters, amulets, good luck charms, and talismans. Often, too, he will show off out of a desire for glory and will prescribe that a family, a village, or a whole region perform sacrifices called saraka, a kind of offering or tax which is usually placed at the corner of land formed by two paths that fork or intersect.

The practice of sorcery in Bambara country is what most defeats our logic. While some sorcerers address the djiné genii directly and begin their formulas with an invocation to the Creator -- whom they call An tigi, min yé fen bê tigi yé, "Our master who is the master of all things," or An tigi Alla, "God our master," leading one to suppose that in the beginning the greatest part of the worship was directed toward God -- others petition at the same time both the djiné genii and the boli genii, now invoking God and now denying and even insulting Him all in one and the same session. A third group of sorcerers have a more clear-cut domain leaving aside God and the djiné genii, they address themselves to the boli and to them alone. They are real [484] globe-trotters and go from one village to another with their talking boli -- for it is said that they talk -- enclosed in a goatskin or, more often, in the hide of a wildcat, on the paws of which swings a little bell that announces their arrival to everyone. UsuaHy they read the [787] future in the intestines of hens, which help them to tell fortunes and draw horoscopes.

A sorcerer is honored because he is feared and dreaded, and all his orders and prescriptions are followed to the letter. Nothing serious is done except through him. He is consulted about everything, even a change of dwelling or a move to a different village, or a journey of /36/ any length; men and women and entire villages through their delegations file before him in turn. The sorcerers hold the Bambara

791 people in their hands; it is they who guide them and force them into obedience by predicting that those who resist will be afflicted with sickness, all kinds of calamities, and death. They are capable of all sorts of actions to preserve their prestige. They compound love philters, talismans, amulets, etc., but they are even better at compounding poisons: they are familiar with Strophanthus and their mixtures of hyena intestines, excrements of human corpses, and saliva taken from their mouths have terrible effects. [278]

791 648 These makers of rain and fair weather, who predict the future, cast lots, and cure the sick are all jealous of one another; there is no unity among them, and since cowardice is each one's chief virtue, there is no fear for the moment that they will press toward revolt. However, one should have no illusions, for that good-fellow smile on the lips of the Bambara in no way gives a true picture of their feelings. They hate the French because they are conquerors, and especially because the French have forbidden them to take slaves, sell, or even own them, and because they cannot administer justice as they please. The elders, who were formerly so powerful, feel their authority decreasing little by little, and there is fury in their hearts. They tremble and are afraid, they dread our rifles and cannons, whose rumblings still ring in their ears; they believe France to be even greater and more powerful than she is. But if some day a bold, enterprising, and audacious sorcerer should appear, he would succeed in creating a temporary union between these divergent groups no matter how slight a control he achieves. Then, without any doubt, we would see partial uprisings like those so frequent among the Moslems. The latter have deep in their hearts a hatred of everything that is not Islam and are never so happy as when they can march behind a fanatical Marabout; certain Frenchmen, well intentioned I like to believe, who refuse to admit thousands upon thousands of conclusive facts, continue nevertheless to help and pamper them, because they do not know the Koran and its teachings. Urged by I know not what naive philanthropy, they warm a snake which will turn against us every time it feels strong enough /37/ to raise its head, and they are preparing bloody days for our colonies in the fairly near future.

793 The pagan priesthood -- like the Moslem -- also casts a halo of
776 strength and power about its priest; he becomes the close friend of his fetish, and the latter often condescends to take his diamou, or family name, and become, for example, the dasiri, or protecting genie, of a village. Depending on the name of its owner, it will be a Djara or a Kouloubali or a Tankara, etc., etc.

793 An intelligent Bambara who, for one reason or another, cannot
564 be a sorcerer, has one other means of becoming feared and powerful: he can become a gnéna sonna or dougoutigi (priest of the protecting fetish of villages, called dasiri), a gnâtigi or bolitigi (matter of a boli), or at least to belong to a retinue such as surrounds every powerful boli fetish.

793 There are curbs on the thirst for fanga, or power, however. The office of gnéna sonna is the prerogative of a particular family within which it is transmitted from brother to brother by right of inheritance, and not every Negro succeeds in obtaining a boli -- I mean an influential boli that would establish him among his people -- even though one can be obtained by purchase. A man desiring a particular boli must first form a retinue for it, and its members must be taken from the village itself; the mutual mistrust and fear of poison are so great that it is not always possible to do so. Beside the price to be paid, varying between 25 and 30 francs, there are the expenses of the konio, or wedding of the fetish (the purchaser marries his boli), which raise its cost to 60, 80, and sometimes 100 francs. Furthermore, there is a mass of liturgical formulas to be engraved in the memory. These must be learned in every detail, for the omission of one sign or gesture, the garbling of one formula can easily incur the disfavor of the fetish, which is relentless with one who is careless and causes him to perish! It should be added that before a person can reward himself with such a luxury as the acquisition of a fetish, he must consult a sorcerer and take his advice, and if he is not rich and already feared, the sorcerer knows how to place his veto. For the mass
794 of the people there is thus only one way to be safe: to become
793 associated with sects, and with as many sects as possible. Through membership they earn the title of "sons of boli," and build relationships for themselves and make friends among those in power, the

bolitigi, the latter have every interest in protecting them, for not only do they pay /38/ their masters annual dues of 80 to 160 cowrie shells, which is little, but they also provide the meats and kola nuts for sacrifices and the d'lo, or beer, for the nocturnal drinking bouts and orgies, and thus are a real godsend.

3. Metamorphosis

The Negroes say that a djiné or a boli genie can pass from one body into another. Today it may paddle in a pond, be enclosed in a tree, or sit on a rock; tomorrow, if it wishes, it will make its dwelling in a cow's tail, in a horn, in a dirty rag. Whatever its dwelling may be, it is never confined. The Negroes compare these spirits to the wind, to a breath which enters and penetrates into a space through the smallest crack and fills it. Yet they have bodies and are equipped with organs; they drink, eat, and procreate and differ from man only in their tenuity. Since the Negroes are convinced that certain people have become able to master and command the spirits, could they not come to believe that it was possible to attain, like them, a rarefied state? In any case, they do believe in metamorphosis, and it is by entering into an animal or plant, or changing himself into an animal, a plant, etc., that the wicked person succeeds most often in avenging himself, in appeasing his hatred, and even in doing evil for the mere pleasure of doing it.

A good number of sorcerers have this privilege, and sorcerers are not the only ones! Entire castes have the power of metamorphosis; among others the Koulé, who dig out canoes and mend cracked gourds, can all change themselves into hyenas. The sons of the Siri, who are members of the sect dedicated to the boli of this name and are called souba (1) because they commit their crimes during the night, change

1. The name souba is derived from sou ("night") and ba ("great"), ma ("man"), being implied. It means "a man of the great night," "men

789
564
754

> who operate in the depth of night," but by no means refers to nocturnal sorcerers. Moreover, in the eyes of the Negroes it designates not a bugaboo, but a reality.

themselves into hyenas in order to dig up corpses and eat them, and into gingin ("owl," "screech owl") to drink the blood of sleeping men and women. It is said that the blood of young girls has an especially exquisite taste, /39/ and when the souba are unable to enter a dwelling in material form to obtain it, they change themselves into such a rarefied breath that they go through the walls and roofs.

753
789
754

All persons whose faces are disfigured with scars resulting from boils or canker sores are considered victims of a souba, as are those whose legs are rotted by syphilis; every person infected by erysipelas goes to the members of the Siri sect, the souba.

791
789

In addition to the souba there are the gné-fla (1), men with

> 1, They are supposed to have the ability to make themselves invisible by means of grisgris hung on their belts. Deprived of these, they are powerless.

two eyes, with second sight, so called because they see the world of invisible beings and know the secret thoughts of men without having to undergo metamorphosis. Some of them are good and some evil; there are those who use their prerogatives to halt the blows of the souba and protect their fellows, and others who use them only to harm their neighbors. As the good as well as the evil can abuse their power, the Negroes keep them all together, and since the souba are almost always gné-fla as well, they are indiscriminately feared and hated.

789

When a person is metamorphosed into something else he keeps his intelligence and his reason, but he is dominated by an instinct, either good or evil, which destroys his will and anesthetizes him.

789 It is impossible for him to resist this force, this power which seizes him and forces him to act. His mercy or his rage is exercised on the first person at hand; he does not even spare those who are dear to him, and his children, his wives, and his friends quite often become his victims. He has one excuse: he remembers nothing -- for a very good reason -- and if he does remember, it seems to him that he dreamed.

794 789 The Siri sect, which admits women to its ranks, hides its mysteries in such profound secrecy that it is impossible to have a really accurate and precise idea of them, at least for the moment. Nor is it possible to know who is a souba without being a souba oneself; one can only guess. If someone were to denounce his fellow as really being a son of the Siri, he would be declaring himself to be a member of the sect, and the vengeance of the people would fall on both the accuser and the accused. /40/

Belief in the souba, the gne-fla, and in all those people metamorphosing themselves is most childish, and like all Europeans I have treated it as a myth, a daydream, and a bogy used by men to terrify women and children. But now, I must state that the contrary is true: this belief is generally held and is firmly entrenched in minds of the Bambara, and anyone who would try to prove the impossibility of metamorphosis to one of them would appear a fool in his eyes, for to him it is a fact (1).

1. The Siri sect, whose members are known in the Ségou circle as the souba, and among the Malinké, the people of the Worodougou, etc., etc., as the soubaga, resembles the cannibals of Uganda, the Basêzi, and the cannibals of the Ouchirombo, the Baswêzi. These cannibals are not a separate people (in a given family some may be Basêzi or Baswêzi and others not), but members of a sect similar to that of the Bambara souba and capable of the same transformations

794
789

and metamorphoses. Although I have no precise data, this coincidence leads me to think that the same is true of cannibals of the Ubangi.

782 To be convinced one need only be present at the sacrifices; no matter whether the offering is to the djiné genii, the boli genii, or to the shades of ancestors, there recurs, always, the phrase: "Deliver us from the souba and the gné-fla." One of the chief functions of the boli fetishes is just this, and there are some whose special and primary role is to make war against the Siri genii. One of these fetishes is the Nama, a powerful boli which is greatly honored, venerated, and, I should say, fashionable in the Ségou circle and among all Mande peoples. The Ngouansa, known especially in the Worodougou, is also said to specialize in this sphere. From time to time it makes its appearance in the Ségou circle, and its owner without fail does his bit of business and fills his purse. People run to him from all sides bringing hens, goats, and kola nuts, and I have seen these Ngouansa tigi, or masters of a Ngouansa, red with blood after spending the entire morning sacrificing. Before cutting their victims' throats, they stand, facing east with arms akimbo, and shout at the tops of their voices: "Souba, you are dogs, you are even less, the excrements of dogs, oubou bo."

791 825 824 Would the name of the souba and the gné-fla be heard so often from the lips of the Negroes, would families, villages, and sects /41/ spill so much blood or offer so many kola nuts, if they did not sincerely believe in them? Not only do they find an irrefutable proof of the possibility of metamorphosis in the fact that the caterpillar turns into a chrysalis which becomes a butterfly, they will also tell you that the winged termite, "that short-lived creature which on winter evenings comes in swarms around the lights, scattering wings everywhere, in the soup and on the plates," buries itself in the ground, swells like a sorghum seed, grows roots, and becomes a graceful shrub and then a beautiful tree provided it is spared by fire. I do not know the scientific name of this shrub or tree, but the Negroes call it sandéré.

4. The dja

774 778 Here again is a word very difficult to translate into our French language. We use dja to translate the words "phantoms," "pictures," "photographs," "shadows," "that which is reflected by water or by a mirror"; but there are other meanings, and there is no question of shadows or images in the following sentences, for example: a dja tikéra, a dja oulila, misiou dja oulila. They mean: "he is afraid," "he is crazed," "the cows are crazed." In the eyes of the Bambara, the dja is not only the shadow, the image, or the outline of objects, it is also that which makes them manifest. It is a force, a power common to beings of all kinds, and even though it cannot be compared to a genie or a soul, they nevertheless think of it as a kind of being which they are unable to define but which has its own existence and can act of its own accord.

[791] 774 784 The gné-fla, whom I mentioned when speaking of the souba, are feared because they see the genii and our private thoughts, and also because they practice sympathetic magic, by taking possession of that which makes the shadows of persons and things. The Bambara is convinced that his dja can be taken, and when this occurs he henceforth no longer casts a shadow. Although, because of their fear of the Europeans and in some cases because they have long been in contact with them, the Bambara may readily pose before a camera, one can nevertheless say that, in general, they do not like to be photographed. Particularly the old people object and begin to resist /42/ as soon as they see a lens. They have the notion in their heads that their dja will escape from them to make an imprint on the plate and leave its form there, and that this form will comprise the portrait, thus placing a part of their being in the hands of the operator and themselves at his mercy. They fear lest, as a result, they lose their shadows and the ability to cast them, and thus become idiots.

[828]

774 Even though the Bambara cannot explain their ideas on this subject, these closely resemble the theories of Mr. de Rochas, discussed by Monseigneur Méric in Volume II of his work, Imagination et Prodiges /Imagination and Marvels/ /Paris, 1905/. The dja is something similar to what English psychologists call a double and

774 the French a phantom. It may be regarded as a kind of fluid, having some degree of consciousness and capable of escaping from the animate or inanimate object to which it belongs, without becoming completely separated from it, and giving that object a shadow, bearing its external form and outline, as well as the imprint of the fear, sorrow, joy, and sadness which may be reflected on a person's face. A dja may also escape and separate and detach itself completely, but nevertheless retain the external form of the object which it left. When a dja leaves its object, it stays in the neighborhood or goes wandering far off, and the being that it has left sees this double or merely feels it, or may even be unconscious of its existence.

774 828 For the Bambara, a dream is not a product of the imagination; it is a reality. They say that while they are asleep their dja sometimes escape and wander far away, and there they actually see and chat with friends, attend real feasts on real drinking bouts. A person is not surprised to awaken after such a dream with a dry throat and an empty stomach, for what he saw, drank, and ate were the dja of things and people, nothing more tenuous or imponderable, and only his dja saw, drank, ate, and enjoyed himself.

787 A dream is quite a deceiver, and its external realization is unusual, but it does sometimes occur. Certain Negroes are famous because they know how to interpret dreams, a knowledge not available to everyone, or again because they know how to dream and prophesy /43/ the more or less immediate future. They have a booth which is fairly well patronized; people consulted them and bring them cowrie shells. There are even people who run and tell them about every interesting story they dream, and since these people take precautions afterward not to miss some predicted piece of luck or to avoid a misfortune that threatens, they are aided in the realization of their dreams without suspecting it, and these results constribute not a little toward fortifying their false beliefs. /44/

Chapter 3

The Bambara's General Ideas on Human Life

1. Sickness

152 753 In his innermost being the Bambara feels an ever unassuaged thirst for happiness, an intense and pressing need to live for enjoyment; therefore he revolts against all suffering, both physical and mental. It seems unnatural to him, and at the least discomfort a person will state and believe that he is the victim of malice, of an enemy who is taking vengeance, and he immediately blames the world of invisible beings and those who have intimate relations with it.

753 Not only do the Bambara consider sickness unnatural, they consider it a more or less conscious force which comes to torture them. For fear of displeasing it or of displeasing the genie, the superior force which has taken it into its service and is using it as it pleases, they surround themselves with precautions against announcing the sickness of one of their people. When one asks a Negro for news of his health, his first answer will be that he is well, and if a member of his family is confined to his mat in agony, he will still tell you: "Toro si t'ala (1), he is suffering no pain."

1. Toro, "suffering"; si, "not any"; te, "is not"; a la, "on him" (la, "on").

755 The sick have unlimited confidence in their sorcerers, who are all doctors and apothecaries, and they submit blindly and without any argument to their orders and prescriptions. From them they receive herbs and leaves, and the infusions or brews made from these are prescribed as beverages or lotions, but most /45/ frequently the sorcerers rub their clients' bodies and gently stroke them, anoint them with oil and grease and spit on the affected part while reciting a formula. And always, of course, the number of grigris and talismans in the possession of the patient is increased by several items.

755 The sorcerer consulted by a sick person explains to him the nature of his illness, tells him whether he is the victim of the hatred of a fetish in the service of some one malicious or envious, or of an enemy who is taking his own vengeance; or whether he is the victim of a gnâma, that fluid, that avenging force which every genie, every man, every animal, and both the living and dead possesses. In serious cases the patient is ordered to sacrifice many hens and quite often nanny goats and billy goats, but in cases that are mild or considered so, the remedies are more childish: should I mention a few?

To cure a headache, the sorcerer sticks the blade of his knife into the ground and places a cauri (1) at the base of the handle. After

[436]

1. A small white shell used as small change; at least 40 are needed to make a sou, or 0.05 francs.

having spit on the cauri and the knife handle, he lays his hands on the patient, who gazes at him; he recites a formula, and, if the sick person is not cured when the prayer is finished, he must at least feel an appreciable improvement, and he always says he does: "A kaf'sa' san, I feel better now.

The sovereign cure for leucoma, they say, is a pinch of powdered hyena dung placed in the eye. Because it is rare and costly, the remedy cannot be bought by all, and powder of cauri shells is substituted for it. This powder is obtained by rubbing a cauri on the stone for grinding millet, a very long process. In order to apply oneself to the task as the old women do, more than training is needed; it calls for patience, or rather, a passivity which cannot be defined.

In cases of ophthalmia and other eye diseases, the temples, the eyebrows, and the tops of the cheeks are greased with kana mixed with a little karite (2) butter. The kana is always enclosed in a bull's

[37]

2. Karite, or butter tree, Bassia parkii, genus of the Sapotaceae.

755 hoof or in an ox's horn; these horns and hoofs /46/ are often decorated with cauri, and from time to time the blood of a victim is poured on them. If a disease is a force, a power which torments human beings, the remedy is another force, another power which is opposed to the first and fights against it. In order to obtain the good graces of this second force as well as its efficacy, people feed it with blood. The kana is of general use; it cures all ills a little, and just as each boli fetish possesses a korti, or harmful powder, enclosed in a horn, so also it possesses its kana, or healing remedy. Since there are as many different kana as there are fetishes, and since, independent of these, the sorcerers also have theirs, the kana are legion and cannot be counted. It is impossible to say what goes into the making of a kana, and the Negroes themselves do not know; they know that charcoal powder goes into it, and that is all. A sorcerer of Kolo, n. kolona, much consulted for orchitis, varicocele, etc., etc., uses glow worms dried in the sun and crushed with a handful of wood charcoal.

[752] Wounds resulting from a bruise caused by a blow or a fall are treated by throwing a handful of ashes into them. The ashes are obtained from dry leaves gathered in the evening in complete darkness under trees deep within thickets, and at random and without looking.

To cure a malady called "strained back," one or several snake sinews are worn as a belt. A hen's craw, exposed to the sun for three days and then cut into thin slices and swallowed with all its contents, will develop an appetite for you for the rest of your days, to the point [752] of insatiability. For burns a poultice of rabbit fur and barbs of guinea-fowl feathers is the sovereign remedy.

To treat rabies, the Bambara have no need of the Pasteur Institute or serum. A person who has been bitten by a rabid dog climbs on a nearby bush, a friend comes and cuts it down, the whole thing falls and rolls on the ground, and rabies are no longer to be feared; they are entirely exorcised. A thread on which a cauri is strung, knotted [751] around the loins, protects a child from blackwater fever, and a string with seven or nine knots, called the tafo, when knotted around the neck, will save you from goiter, croup, laryngitis, a persistent cough, etc. The tafo is used in a general way, just /47/ like the kana; it is employed for almost all illnesses, and there is no malady that it

755 cannot cure. In order to become fertile, a sterile woman knots one 7/1
[842] around her wrist or biceps, and a strange tafo it is, taken from the skin of a monkey's hand.

Syphilitic children, covered with pimples and pustules of magnan -- the name with which they adorn this disease -- have chicken droppings for their crême Simon, and this is the ointment of ointments.

[843] Chalk is the specific for pregnant women; to ease the mild discomforts which generally precede maternity, they draw pretty white crosses on the abdomen or on the chest, between the breasts.

2. Death

761 If sickness is not natural, there is all the more reason why death
195 should not be. In the eyes of the Bambara there is no evil comparable to it. They fear it and its very name makes them tremble. When it is necessary for someone to announce a death or refer to it, he quite often uses a circumlocution in the presence of a member of the family. At the death of a child it is in good taste to say: "A sagira a ko, he has gone backwards," and if the deceased was a grown woman: "She is no more, she has ended her career, she has been buried." The politest of all the expressions concerning married men who have passed from life to death is: "A so yélémana, he has changed his dwelling." The initiates of certain sects cannot bear to be spoken to about death, and the korodouga, of the kouéré or koté sects, for example, get up and leave in displeasure, no matter how little this subject is dwelt upon in their presence.

761 The Bambara are not unaware that Moslems, missionaries, and all Europeans make light of their fetishes and scorn them; therefore in the presence of any of these they direct to God the accusation that He has caused the death of one of their people. This procedure is only a courtesy, an indirect way of respecting the belief of those to whom they speak, whose life they share, and whom they fear. They know that God has the power of life and death over human beings, but they attribute death to Him so seldom, that during seven consecutive years spent in the Sudan I did not encounter a single instance.

/48/ Death is always caused by a wicked person, by an enemy who

7/1 [i.e. A tafo, a string with seven or nine knots. --Analyst]

76| is taking vengeance, or by a djiné fetish also known as gnéna, by a boli fetish also called gnâ, by a souba or initiate of the Siri fetish who does evil for pleasure, or finally by a gnâma, a force about which I have already said so much. Although they may assert that one can die of old age, their whole pattern of behavior and expression clearly shows that for them old age alone cannot cut the thread of a man's days; it is a grateful genie, the fetish of his favorite sect, and his family fetishes, if he has any, that come and take away his soul.

When a child has died expressions such as the following flow from all lips: "A fa gnâma do, it is his father's gnâma." -- "Souba do, it is a souba." -- "Kono gnâma do, it is the gnâma of a bird." -- "Djiné ou ta no do, it is the way the djiné genii behave." -- Since the djiné readily find homes in and on trees, the Bambara also have this easily understood metaphor: "A yéléla djiri djougou kan, he has climbed an evil tree," that is to say, he has displeased a spirit of the bush, either because he has climbed the tree which it uses as a dwelling or because he has broken its branches or picked its fruit. At the death of a young man, a young girl, or any adult, all the people of the village are plunged in sorrow, and one hears them repeating to each other: "Souba ta no do, that is the way the souba behave"; "ou yé korti sou a la, the poison of a fetish, the korti has been thrown at him," korti is the name of the poison; "doukono dir'à ma, poison has been poured for him"; "boli no do, that is how the boli fetishes behave," "Komo y'a fa, Kono (1) y'a fa, Nia y'a fa, Douga y a fa, etc.;

1. Note that Komo and Kono are two different fetishes.

it is Komo that has killed him, it is Kono, Nia, Nama, or Douga, etc., that has killed him." -- At the death of an old man who owned either djiné or boli fetishes, they say: "A gnénaou -- or -- a gnâou séra a ma, his djiné genii or boli fetishes have got to him; they have come to take him." If he did not have a fetish, his death is ostensibly attributed to old age, but one is given to understand that he was very specially devoted to such-and-such a fetish, which therefore is not unconnected with his death. I know the /49/ Bambara say to Europeans,

761 "Koroya do, it is old age," but let us allow them to finish their sentences and continue their thoughts "a ko toun kadi Komo yé, he was beloved by the Komo," -- "à ko toun kadi Kono yé, Nama yé, Douga ye, he was beloved by the Kono, the Nama, the Douga," etc.

761 When people pass by holding a rooster or hen by the feet one
782 may wonder where they are going; if one follows, one finds that they
776 are going to the temple of a fetish, there to sacrifice and to redden their god with blood. "A toun koromé Alla séra à ma, he was old and God came to him," is an expression which is rarely on Bambara lips. When it is heard, it is used with a very special meaning; it signifies that the old man in question was a good man, beloved by all, even by God, but by no means that God killed him. The sacrifices made on this occasion clearly demonstrate this, for they are all directed to a fetish. If God alone were the cause and not the fetishes, the family of the deceased would refrain from all sacrifice; at the very most, it would offer a saraka by order of a sorcerer, but even the saraka offered to God -- and they are offered to Him -- is not a sacrifice, as we shall see later.

761 The priests of a djiné fetish and the owners and priests of a boli
778 fetish have the consolation that they always fall under the blows of the genie which they hold and to which they sacrifice. As for other mortals, 80 times out of 100, and one might say even more without exaggerating, they are killed by a boli fetish. The Komo, Kono, Nia, Nama, and Douga fetishes etc., are the chief murderers, and entire villages are often decimated by them.

761 Although they are able to deliver blows on their own initiative,
578 they are often only intermediaries, the agents of a depraved will to
674 which they have offered their services; almost always there is either a thrown poison, korti, or a poison that is poured, dounkono. Thus
754 sorcerors are consulted at every death; one is sought through their mediation. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is the great maxim for the Bambara as for the Jews, and vengeance must be taken on the one who was able to win over the good graces of a fetish and force it to bring suffering or mourning into the bosom of a family. This vengeance is obtained through the intermediary of a fetish, and

761 therefore secretly, and good relations between the actual /50/ or sup-
598 posed culprit and the unfortunate family are not broken in anyway.
674 The strange fact that has always surprised me is that all these people
754 converse amicably, do each other small favors, invite each other to drink and eat, while in their hatred they maintain a constant guard. They watch each other as they smile -- one party to protect their lives and their interests, the other to obtain vengeance. And on the day when it is least expected, that vengeance explodes inexorably. Cases of poisoning are not unusual in the Sudan, and it is not without reason that almost every death is blamed on the korti and the dounkono. I know that many die a perfectly natural death, and I have seen dropsy brought on by syphilitic consumption stupidly attributed to poisoning by the Komo, acute peritonitis to poisoning by the Kono, dysentery to poisoning by the Nama, undue swelling of the testicles with purulent abscesses, which were consequences of misconduct, to poisoning by the Nia, an abscess in the bladder to the Douga or the Nama. But it is a definite fact which I have noted many times in the course of seven years, and which any European living among the Negores can observe, however little he knows the language, the diseases which kills the natives is contracted when they return from a market, from a festival in honor of a fetish, or from a drinking bout where d'lo flows freely. The person's kidneys are hard and painful; his stomach causes him horrible suffering, his intestines seem to be torn by thorns, and there is complete anuria. In three or four days at the most his time is up.

The administrators at the head of a circle have all had to settle these cases which touch on the question of poisoning, and I doubt if there is one who has seen the matter clearly, so difficult it is to establish poisoning by korti and by dounkono. Let us refrain from throwing a stone at them; in a similar situation we would all be at a loss, for here there are always as many guilty persons as there are innocent, and all of them deserve the rope even while able openly to claim peace, liberty, and life. Since in the eyes of the Negro the fetish alone is guilty, there is a very simple means of stopping the decimation of the population and of allowing it to grow!

000 I pass over and do not dare to give this means: it is too radical, especially in our era; it is not anticlerical; it lacks breadth /51/ of mind. The fetish trees would have to be cut and burned, the boli confiscated, and their priests and owners employed in colonial works. Nor should the sorcerers be forgotten -- these men who spend their lives cheating people and stealing from them, who know only one kind of cultivation, the cultivation of laziness; finally, many schools would have to be opened. Paganism and barbarism would soon come to an end. The missionaries are there, ready to devote themselves, and they would ask no sacrifice from the treasury of the colony to do so; but the missionary has a morality which is too elevated, too noble, to be given to savages.... With what, then, is paganism to be replaced? With Islamism no doubt! Islam soils everything it touches, it abases a man more than it raises him. It is better to let the Negro redden the trees of his bush with blood, for he would gain nothing by the change. Every médersa (1), even that of djenné, is useless,

1. A médersa is an Arab school.

nonsensical, and absurd; Arabic is not spoken in the Sudan, so what good is it to give the natives a language which is neither theirs nor French? Why should we want Islam in the Sudan? The villages are happy, full of zest; let us not try to make them sad and silent, let us not make them Arab villages, where one finds a human lizard on the street corner, lazily hidden in his burnoose and a hoarse dog barking on the walls, and where all the gates are shut. These Arab villages give the feeling of a prison, the chill of the tomb, and there is no liberty there except for vermin and lice.

754 674 If it is difficult to ascertain a poisoning by korti and by dounkona, here is the reason. When a Negro wants to take revenge, he goes to find a sorcerer to whom he confides his plan and gives his reasons. He is more interested in seeing his enemy suffer than in seeing him dead, and if he succeeds in injuring him and his family, harming his body and his possessions, he declares himself satisfied.

Sometimes the sorcerer undertakes the task, but he is cautious, knows how to contrive matters to suit the occasion. He can assume

754 all functions to some degree, and it is to his own advantage to be con-
674 tent, in such an instance, with the position of solicitor; to whoever /52/ consults him, he indicates a celebrated fetish in the hands of one of his friends. The Bambara runs there without delay, and the master of the fetish, generously and heavily paid, takes the god out of its dirty goatskin. Onto one of its instruments (for a boli is manifold, and [778] horns of cattle and antelopes, varnished with blood and brownish in color, are mingled with other objects in the shape of an eggplant, a turnip, a beetroot, a napkin ring, horse dung, etc., etc.), onto the sirikoun, which is almost always wrapped in a red shirt front, he ties firmly with a cotton thread seven straws five to seven centimeters long. The petitioner explains his visit, names the enemy on whom he wants to take vengeance, gives the reasons that compel him, and the master of the fetish recites his formulas, reddens his sirikoun with blood, and plasters onto its sides some spittle containing chewed kola nut.

754 If the sacrificial hen dies with spread wings and breast on the
674 ground and if when split in half the kola nut falls with the pulp down
787 and the round side up, the contemplated revenge is put off until later, for it is believed that the sacrifice has not been accepted. Our Bambara then goes away, relieved of a hen, two kola nuts, and at least 160 cauri, but nowise defeated; eight or ten days later he returns to the charge, unless he is too impatient to wait and consults a new sorcerer, who gives him orders to appeal to a fetish that shows a greater interest and has a more enterprising and less timid disposition.

If the hen dies on its side or on its back with its feet in the air, and if the pieces of kola nut fall on the round side with the pulp on top, the sacrifice is accepted, and this is the god's answer to the effect that he is taking his client's side. The enemy is thenceforth
754 placed under the boli a blara boli koro, the sanctioned expression;
674 he is placed under the avenging power of the fetish and is in its hands,
278 and the master of the idol, the sacrificer, and the people in his retinue plot to make him disappear at once. They undertake the task themselves as seldom as possible, however; they prescribe sacrifices and offerings to the client and give him a deer horn carefully tied up, telling him how to use it. This deer horn is nothing less than a horn

754 of poison, and the brown powder concealed in it is usually Strophanthus
674 seed /53/ crushed and kneaded into excreta of human corpses and
278 saliva taken from their mouths. This mixture is dried in the shade and then wrapped in a piece of hyena intestine, and to render the effects more immediate and certain, the fetish is brought out and placed on this meal and a sacrifice made. These sacrosanct preparations are made at night, if possible in the first quarter of the moon, and never on a Monday or Thursday, which are days of rest for the boli gods (1).

527 1. The boli have two days' leave per week, and the Negroes also take
776 this rest. However, they are broad-minded on this point even though for certain labors they ask the religious chief or a sorcerer to be allowed to work. As a rule a boli may not go out Sunday or Monday night nor on Wednesday or Thursday. They quite often do go out, however, but only by command of the fetish or a sorcerer. To bring out a fetish is to spend the night dancing the dance of the fetish, and when the initiates want to dance they always manage to do so. The boli are also sacrificed to on Monday and Thursday even though they are at rest. In theory there is rest for the fetishes; actually, the idea is loosely applied.

754 To succeed and to keep from displeasing the fetish, who would
674 then abandon your cause and turn against you, you must follow the prescriptions of the priest and members of his council to the letter; the omission of one rite, one sign, one formula, one imprecation, destroys the power of the poison contained in the horn, or at least renders it ineffective. Sometimes this powder is thrown and is called korti sou, and at other times it is poured and is called dounkono di.

754
674 The dounkono is administered or poured by sliding a pinch of it under the nail of the middle finger of the left hand and throwing it with a skillfully concealed flick into the food or drink of the enemy. Food sauce, dégé (millet flour mixed with water), millet beer (d'lo), and di kolé (hydromel) are suitable and without doubt easily poisoned.

Throwing poison, korti sou, remains the prerogative of the sorcerers, priests, and masters of the fetishes, and one must be somebody in order to use it (2). As with the dounkono, a pinch is slid

E24
189

2. There are many old Bambara who, after a meal with a neighbor or friend, mutter a prayer while washing their hands and make the motion of throwing korti poison. This is a curse which they throw against the enemies of the family that has received them.

under /54/ the nail of the middle finger, and with a strong flick it is thrown onto the enemy or merely toward him or onto an object which has belonged to him, and it is ordered to be effective, to kill him if possible, or at least to reward him with a sickness which he will long remember.

The Bambara fear the korti far more than the dounkono and if an enemy seriously threatens him with it they tremble. For a person so threatened is no longer dealing with a man, a power equal to his own; he must be on guard against an all-powerful god who places his strength and power at the service of the man. The force is submissive and obedient, triumphant and vengeful; it delivers its blows blindly where it is ordered and onto any person against whom it is aroused and against whom it is hurled. That, in my opinion, is the exact translation of the expression, korti sou ma la. As a dog is set on a person (oulou sou ma la), so korti poison is thrown at him (korti sou ma la).

The Negroes say that korti has a crushing effect: when it strikes you, you feel a violent upheaval throughout your body, your limbs stiffen, and you fall backward. You may die of the attack, but

754 usually you come back to life and get off with a fainting spell followed
674 by violent hiccups and vomiting (1). For several days afterwards, and

1. Were I not afraid of provoking a smile, I would admit that in February, 1908, having gone to a Da woro, a celebration which takes place six days after circumcision, I was called by the master of the Komo and, when we were alone, he threw korti at me with the usual curses and left. Without doubt emotion as well as the fatigue of the journey and of the previous day had much to do with my reaction, but I immediately felt stomach cramps and held onto the wall so as not to fall. My discomfort lasted from five to ten minutes.

sometimes several months, a malignant fever confines you to your mat, your limbs swell, deep and purulent sores cut into your body, and so you will drag on for months and months, incurable, and a burden to everyone and to yourself.

The korti sometimes strikes you in such an unobtrusive way that you do not feel it entering. You notice it later when sickness comes, and its nature is declared by the sorcerer, that infallible being who is never mistaken. /55/

754 The Negro is almost without defense against the korti. A person
755 poisoned by it must have recourse to a more powerful fetish, and he kills hens and goats in vain, for he seldom finds one. He covers himself with grigris, surrounds himself with talismans, and nothing does any good. Even the two little deer horns hung around his neck remain ineffectual and unable to defend him, holy as may be the powder they contain.

754 Against the dounkono, or poison that is poured into food and
674 drink, a victim not only has recourse to his gods and his grigris, which

754 become detached and fall of their own accord "if they are well made
674 and have lost none of their complete power"; he also has a mass of antidotes. Almost always he escapes with nothing more than a few days on his mat and a good stomach-ache, and although his convalescence may be long and can sometimes go on indefintely, at least he is shown sympathy; he gets a big share in the sacrifices offered by his friends, and his broth improves.

754 If the korti are many and cannot be numbered -- "each fetish
278 has its own" -- the dounkono are still more numerous, for in addition to the fetishes, the sorcerers, elders, men, and women, all know how to prepare a poison and give it whatever strength and power is desired. Every poison produces a special disorder in the body depending on the hand that throws or pours it. When in doubt, the Bambara consult the being who never deceives and cannot be mistaken: the sorcerer! And it is usually he who prescribes the antidote.

754 In the eyes of the Bambara, pouring poison (dounkono di) or
673 throwing it (korti sou) is a blameworthy act, and those who are guilty of it have a dismal reputation among their fellows. One should not be surprised to see this crime remain unpunished, however, for in their eyes it does not bear the same odium as an overt or concealed murder by main force. I might even say, without fear of error, that this way of taking revenge is for them not a crime in the strict sense of the word. They so often have recourse to fetishes to settle a dispute and so readily threaten an enemy with the wrath of the gods, that taking vengeance through their intermediary leaves them calm and without any remorse. Besides, with what reproach should we reproach one who does so? It is true that he is cruel and without pity, /56/ but who gives power to the powder that he pours and the powder that he throws? It is the god, the fetish, and it alone is guilty! So let the enemy obtain the fetish's good graces and ward off its blows by sacrificing, let him set a more powerful god against it.

761 As one can see to the Bambara there is nothing natural about
753 physical and mental suffering and death; there is always an intermediary, and suffering and death are caused by an enemy who is taking vengeance, by a wicked person, by a sorcerer, or by a fetish.

3. The Reincarnation of Souls

775 769 It is a great surprise that the Bambara believe in the reincarnation of souls. Some do not dare to believe in it because they sacrifice to the shades of their ancestors, and others, "cultivated minds, nourished by the sanest philosophy," reject this belief as illogical, since the religion of the Negro is the worship of the dead! They do, in fact, worship the dead, but in the Bambara religion this worship, extensive as it is, remains a detail, and not the foundation. To honor the shades of his ancestors (but only of those who were heads of families, so that the worship of the dead is already somewhat limited -- with all due respect to those who see nothing but it), the Bambara family head throws a big blot of chicken blood and a mouthful of chewed kola nut onto the dégé, or millet flour mixed with water, and pours it onto the wall at the entrance of his hut. He does so to implore the help and protection of that power or authority which his predecessors possessed in their position as family head, an authority exactly the same as that which he himself possesses. He believes, nonetheless, in the reincarnation of souls! This belief is general and universal among fetishists, and if some do not dare admit it before Europeans and [576] Moslems, their reticence is due to simple human respect, to a fear of contradicting beliefs which they know to be contrary to their own, a wish not to offend anyone and not to be the butt of laughter and ridicule.

766 775 Infants who die at the breast before having achieved the use of reason are buried in a corner of the inner courtyard and sometimes even in the hut where they were born. Before such a child is buried, one of its limbs, usually the big toe of the right foot, is broken, and sometimes the father marks it with a knife on /57/ the shoulder, the arm, or the chest. He thinks that the child who will come after it will be animated by the soul of the dead one, and he neglects nothing that might possibly enable him to ascertain whether it is. This stupid and ridiculous operation is commonly performed under the eyes of the mother, and some strange events occur. Since she must submit 775 to the will of her husband as soon as possible and have marital relations 826 with him, she soon conceives. During her pregnancy her imagination

775 826 may be active and in her dreams she may dwell on the events which accompanied the burial of her dead child. Thus, she sometimes gives birth to an infant which has the marks made by the father. Such occurences contribute not a little to "confirm" the Bambara's belief in reincarnation of souls. At Wélengéla, on the road from Ségou to Sens, there was a Negro who had a cleft upper lip from birth, and the people of the village were unanimous in giving the reason. His mother had given birth only to sickly and puny infants, all of whom died within few weeks. At the death of the last one the father, furious, cut his lip with a stroke of the knife. When he returned to life, the child did not want to take back the lip that his father had removed! I have seen others who from birth had a sort of tattoo on the back, chest, or arms, and the parents of each did not hesitate to tell me that it was the mark made on his deceased older brother.

775 551 Children born after a deceased sister or brother are given a special name; it would seem that the Negroes seek to make the soul of this small being feel how inconsiderate he was toward his parents in coming into the world and immediately leaving, after having kindled both love and hope in their hearts. Perhaps they also think to put on a good countenance before their fellows, for it is a great disgrace not to have children or to have only children who die at birth. Both theories are plausible, and the second would only be an expression of humility disguising a secret hope. The names most frequently given to these latecomers are: Malobali, "shameless one"; Ta fli, "go throw it away"; Foui té, "he is nothing"; Fou, "nothing"; etc. -- If the first theory that I propose is accepted these names would be translated as follows: "Are you not ashamed (i.e., to come into the world only to leave it so soon)?" -- "Might just as well throw you away, bury you (i.e., for all the time /58/ you spend among us)." -- "You are no good /literally, in French: "a being of nothing"/ (you are but a heartless one, you who come to us only to leave us in a short time)." -- "That is nothing." A Negro blowing on the palm of his hand gives us the full meaning of this word; the gesture translates his thought: "You are no more to us than nothing, are you not like a breath that passes and disappears?"

775 551 Like this first theory, the second, too, can be accepted, and the names can be translated as a lament of the parents to those who congratulate them: "He is without shame (doubtless he has come back to leave us again)." --"We may as well throw him away (i.e., will he not leave us shortly?)." -- "He is a worthless man (i.e., do you think he will not abandon us?)." -- "He is nothing (i.e., it all is the same to us whether we have him or not; will he stay with us longer than a breath which passes and disappears?)."

But whatever theory is accepted, the Negroes' belief in the reincarnation of children who died at the breast before having attained the use of reason remains unchanged. They are also generally unanimous in believing in the reincarnation of young men and women and men and women who die in the prime of life. Such persons have not completed the whole cycle of their existence and must begin it again.

And what of the old men? Do not they come back to life? When a child brings to mind the features of a deceased elder of the family, does it not receive his name? A Bambara never uses the name of a man whom he respects in vain or in an unsuitable manner; so a child animated by the soul of an old man is given a second name, a borrowed name, and the real name is known only by the father, the mother, close friends, and the one who bears it. However, many are given a most expressive name which testifies to this belief; they are called segi, sagi, "he who has come back to life."

164 775 The legends -- and there are many -- only confirm what I put forward; so need I cite any? An old man of Fobougou, a village about 30 or 40 kilometers from Ségou, not far from the Bani on the road that leads to Koutiala, was given magnificent funeral honors at his death. The fetishes were brought out of their dirty dens and bathed in the blood of victims; the women sang to the sound of the drum for three days running. It was a festival which lacked nothing, not even 775 d'lo, or millet beer. A few years later some young people of the village going in search of work went into the Tlébi (1) region,

[103]

1. The term Tlébi is used to denote the entire western region, including Bamako, Kati, Kita, Kayes, Bakel, etc., as far as the ocean.

775 walking in the direction of Kita. They stopped in a village near this city and were lodged by a Malinke (2). On entering the courtyard,

2. A Mandingo tribe whose group "taboo" is the Mali or Mani, the hippopotamus.

they stopped dumfounded, for they found sitting on a mat an elderly man whose features were familiar to them, -- wasn't he the old man of Fobougou? It was he, for he greeted them and asked them news of the old men of the village and of the members of his family. After supper they returned to the courtyard, wanting to sit near their old man, whom they had found again so far from his native land, but he was no longer there, and their host told them that he had fled, refusing to tell what direction he was taking.... "That was our old man," say the people of Fobougou with great conviction, for they believe in this as in the capture of Ségou. "Our young people saw him, talked with him, and some had known him before his death. Without doubt," they add, "he must have suffered in his family while he was alive, so he did not dare come back to life in our midst." This story, which I heard in Fobougou itself, is told more or less everywhere with a few variations; in September, 1908, between Ségou and Koulikoro on the Niger, one of the laptot (3) told it to his colleagues as they squatted

[505] 3. Negroes who serve as sailors on the river are called laptot.

around him in a circle.

775 551 576 In Ouentja, a village an hour and a half or two hours at the most from the Bani, on the road between Ségou and Koutiala, the people have such great respect for one of their deceased former chiefs, the old sagi, that they avoid saying his name. They have even changed or rather abbreviated one of their greetings, and while almost everywhere else strangers are greeted with the words: "i dangha sagi," here they say to you only: "i danghana (4)." According to the /60/

775
551
576

4. I dangha sagi, "may you be blessed on your arrival, on your return into our midst." -- (Your return to us is a blessing.) -- The Negroes abbreviate, saying, i dana sagi; it is only old men and those who pride themselves on speaking their language well, who articulate clearly and say i dangha sagi.

legend, this sagi whose name one avoids taking in vain, was chief of the village and influential in its environs. He died very old, took on flesh again in the womb of a woman of the family, and recommenced the cycle of his existence. He again became village chief, and again died in extreme old age, and returned to the flesh again a third time. As always he was chief, passed from life to death in extreme old age, was honored and respected by everyone, and received funeral honors such as have never been awarded to any Negro prince.

775 At the time of death the soul goes into Lahara, a vague word, so vague that a Bambara cannot define it or give you any idea of it. It is the place where the invisible beings live and where everything becomes invisible. Children and those who have not completely fulfilled the cycle of their existence, only pass through and hasten to return to the wombs of their mothers, or at least to those of women of their families.

775 A secret force urges old men to return to the flesh again in
769 their own family, but sometimes they refuse and seek limbs elsewhere. They spend a longer time in Lahara and, doubtless matured by experience, they are not always in a hurry to reappear. Many remain there for a number of years, awaiting a favorable moment, and this uncertainty hovering over the fate of the old men, may be a reason for sacrifices to the dead. One definite fact is that these sacrifices are directed only to the dead who have had authority in the country, the village, or the family, and the honors rendered them seem to be

775 directed more to the authority which they had in their lifetimes than
769 to the persons themselves.

A good number of Bambara believe in hell and assert that the
775 souls of the wicked are condemned by God to eternal torment. It is clear that they are changed into demons and do not come back to life, but it is so difficult to deserve hell that not one Bambara goes there, and they live without any fear, just as if it did not exist. This belief in hell perhaps indicates an exception to my statement on the reincarnation of souls but does not destroy its validity, and it can be stated that the majority of Negroes believe in such a reincarnation. /61/

Chapter 4

Bambara Ideas concerning God, Invisible Beings, and Adam and Eve

1. Belief in God

776 The Bambara believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who is Creator and Master of all things; they believe in God, in a recompensing God who can punish and reward. Their most polished formulas are those in which they testify to their belief in Him, and His name is on their lips at every moment without any special reason.

776 To a young married couple, a Bambara hastens to say: "May
576 your union be happy, may God give you peace and many children," and when a family is in sorrow, for instance because they have lost one of the members, it is in God that they seek consolation and in invoking Him that they give comfort: "May God have pity on him and grant him a happy sojourn in Lahara," "may He not separate him from good people and may He add to your days those of which he has been deprived." (1)

776 1. These last phrases have been taken
775 by some as a reason to doubt that the

776
775

Bambara believe in the reincarnation of souls. But the Negroes say that a soul separated from the body lacks something, it is not complete. Since a soul stays in Lahara for a fairly long time, until it finds the opportunity to be reincarnated and decides to do so, the wish is expressed that during this period that it may live with the souls of good people and not suffer too much from the loss of its body -- and nothing more. These comforting expressions are heard at every death, whether of a child, a man, or an old man.

776
842 The sterility of a woman is obviously not natural; it is attributed to fetishes, to the evil spells of a malicious person, and quite often /62/ also to God. "Alla b'a kégné dén-na --, God is placing an obstacle to /against/ her having children." As the Bambara gives small gifts of honey, cotton, butter, sugar, or cowrie shells to a woman who has just given birth, they say, "May God soothe your back (your pains); may He preserve your child." Upon receiving the slightest favor, the recipient commends the one who performed it to the protection of the Almighty, and the wishes at festivals and drinking bouts are an endless litany a large part of which refers to God.

776 The Bambara speak the name of God apropos of a trifle and always -- except in certain sacrifices to the boli fetishes where they use it blasphemously -- with some respect. I confess that (if I did not know through being somewhat acquainted with them that in their mouths this name is a word and no more, a commonplace into which enters neither affection nor love) it would sometimes seem that they have deep and tender feelings of piety. In fact there is nothing more touching than to hear a pagan Negro, a Bambara, answer whoever [576] asks after his health: "Nébi Alla tanoun, I praise God, I glorify God."

4: Henry--55 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

776 In the mouths of the Bambara, the name of God is only a word!
782 Although they acknowledge Him as sole and sovereign master of all things, Who created the visible, the invisible, and all that exists, although they believe Him capable of rewarding the good and punishing the evil even in this world (but suffering and death are rarely, or practically never, attributed to Him), they do not dream of praying to Him or invoking Him, and they who redden everything a little with the blood of victims leave God without an altar, without a priest, and without a sacrifice. They address Him directly only when ordered to do so by a sorcerer; and then they comply through fear, because they are forced to -- "djakoyala, by force," as they say so well, and their hearts are not in it.

They appeal to the Almighty Being indirectly, through the mediation of the fetishes called djiné, but actually this indirect appeal is barely noticeable -- their knowledge has been dimmed and is becoming dimmer each day, and the created has replaced the uncreated. As I will explain when speaking of the worship of the djiné genii, the mediator between the Bambara and the Divinity has risen to the detriment of God; He has been eclipsed and the mediator has taken His place.

000 This evolution of the Negro is in no way an ascending one; it is actually a decline, for from a more perfect state they have descended to a /63/ less perfect one, and from the less perfect they have arrived at a discord in which they bury themselves a little more every day. This is a strange evolution which in no way recalls the theories of rational evolutionists.

776 I have said that the Bambara address God directly by order of
782 a sorcerer, and from time to time an individual, a family, or an entire village can be seen at a crossing of paths, in a bare spot outside the village, or sometimes even in the village under one of the great trees that shade the square, offering Him /millet/ flour mixed with water, hens, goats, and kola nuts. That is the saraka.

2. The saraka

782 Europeans -- civilian, military, or of the church -- easily confuse a saraka with a sacrifice, no matter how much they know of Bambara ways and customs. They do not even see that there is a difference, since sometimes it involves the shedding of blood. But even a bloody saraka is not a sacrifice; I even deny it the name of offering, for it is a tax, a tribute, and in my opinion that is the only appropriate name for it.

782 791 Private or public, with or without bloodshed, it is always performed on the express order of a sorcerer who, as we know, has intimate relations with the world of spirits and learns from them what the Divinity demands. When a sorcerer speaks and gives his oracles they are obeyed and carried out, so greatly are his threats feared, and it is all done "djakoyola, because forced." The saraka is given under his orders as the tax is given to the head of the circle.

782 778 In the eyes of the Bambara the saraka has no other character than that of a tax, a tribute paid either to the Divinity or to the fetishes. In February, 1907 the rumor spread in the villages around Ségou that the Komo fetish of Sioribougou had spoken. "Quick, give Death a hen through me in a saraka," the fetish said. "It is preparing to decimate you, and the only way left for you to disarm it is to give it a hen." The sorcerers confirmed this folly, the masters of the Komo found it to their taste, and not one head of a family dared refuse the hen that Death demanded. So they offered it, and the formula on this occasion was this: "The Komo of Sioribougou has ordered us to offer /64/ Death a white hen as a saraka. Komo, so-and-so makes this offering for himself and his family through your mediation; it is his saraka. If the wind blows from the east, may this hen preserve him from it! If it blows from the west, may it also preserve him! If the wind blows from the Ouorodougou (the country of the kola nut, the south), may this hen deliver him from it, and if it blows from the north may it deliver him from it also!" Cutting the hen's throat, the sacrificer of the Komo then added, reddening his fetish: "This is a saraka, the saraka which so-and-so gives to Death on behalf of himself, his wives, his children, and his friends.

782 The Komo of Sioribougou has ordered us to do this; its mother,
778 M'gouni Domba, informed it that we owe this saraka to Death."

782 The saraka, a term derived from the Arabic word (صدقة) meaning "alms," is no less than compulsory giving of alms to God, the djine genii, or to ancestors upon orders of a sorcerer; it really is a tax, a tribute which cannot be avoided and which is offered and presented (1) to the invisible beings.

1. Saraka di, "to give a saraka,"
is the Bambara expression.

A saraka is in no way a sacrifice, even when it involves bloodshed. Cutting the throat of a hen, a dog, or a kid does not in itself constitute a sacrifice, for otherwise we would have to conclude that every butcher and every cook sacrifices. He who cuts the throats must have the intention of making a sacrifice, and this intention is so essential that it is always expressed by the Negroes: "soni do, this is a sacrifice," he says as he makes the knife thrust. In performing a saraka, it is important for the officiant to say that he is not sacrificing, so he expresses his intention in the words: "saraka do, this is a saraka," and all present repeat after him: "saraka do, this is a saraka."

In every sacrifice there is a priest, and the responsibility is especially entrusted to him, but in the saraka there is no priest strictly speaking. Doubtless when a saraka is given by a village or a family, the head of the village or of the family is asked to officiate, but this is done out of deference, or by necessity if the saraka involved is given indirectly through the mediation of a fetish. In the case of a direct saraka the sorcerer himself can designate the person who should give it, and anyone, man or woman, is eligible; they need only be either circumcised or excised. Obviously, a woman is /65/ never [562] chosen for a public saraka. Where a man is available, a woman must step aside, and in order to safeguard the principles of the hierarchy, a respected old man, an elder, is chosen in the absence of a priest.

At the end of a public sacrifice the sacrificer usually receives a choice morsel and the skin of the animal, and those present roast

782 the meat and eat it on the spot. When a saraka is given, barring a very special order by the sorcerer, meats, millet flour, kola nuts, and cowrie shells are left on the spot, and only the poor may take and eat them. Most frequently, the children of both sexes are called, and it is they who devour the meats and the flour. As soon as this food has been received, the leftovers are gathered and placed in a corner formed by two paths that meet or cross. When a saraka is offered by the whole village, a goat is almost always slaughtered, and the skin, folded in four or six ply, is tied with gnama fou (1), and then hung

[824] 1. Bouhinia reticulata, commonly called "tree of Judea."

on the end of a pole at the entrance of the village.

A saraka is never given to the boli fetishes; it is given to djiné fetishes and to God. It may, or may not, involve bloodshed, and it may be given directly or indirectly. A direct saraka can be given by anyone, and by either a man or a woman; they need only be circumcised or excised, depending on their sex. But to offer a saraka, indirectly through the mediation of a djiné genie or of a boli (a boli is never intermediary in a saraka given to God), the owners and sacrificers of the djiné and boli genii must officiate, for they alone have the privilege of speaking and appealing directly to these gods. In saraka of this sort two simultaneous and distinct acts are always performed; in the case of a saraka involving bloodshed there is no doubt on this subject. The saraka animal has its throat cut in front of the fetish chosen as intermediary, and this fetish takes the responsibility of telling the rightful one that this slaughtering was done as a tribute or tax presented to him. And this procedure is in no way illogical, for it is not at all the flesh and bones of the animal that are given to the invisible being; it is the animal's life, the blood which contains its ni, or life. Two things are given in a saraka -- the material and the immaterial, and when it is indirect /66/ blood must necessarily be spilled for the benefit of the mediator, so that he can lay hands on the life of the animal given in tribute and offer it to the rightful one.

The saraka is the Bambara's only direct religious act toward their Creator and sovereign Lord. Although it is often performed and presented in the corner formed by two paths that fork or cross, it may be given anywhere, and I was right in saying that the Bambara God remains without priest, altar or sacrifice, and, strictly speaking, without worship.

3. The Bambara Belief in God is not of Islamic Origin any more than are their Ideas on Heaven, Hell, and the World of Invisible Beings (1)

1. Cf. J. Brun of the White Fathers, "Notes sur les Croyances et les Pratiques religieuses des Malinkés fétishistes /Notes on the Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Malinke Fetishists/," Anthropos, II, pp. 952-954.

Bambara notions of God, heaven and hell, and the world of invisible beings conform so closely to the teachings of the Koran, that we ask ourselves first of all if they were not received from the Moslems. Our surprise increases even more when we begin to study these people, for with respect to religion the only terms in which they can express themselves in present-day language are purely and exclusively Arabic. This is a fact, and the similarity is very easy to establish.

The angels -- Bambara méléké, Arabic mala'ika -- are spirits -- Bambara hakili, Arabic 'aqal --, superior to the genii' -- Bambara djiné, Arabic el-djin --; beings intermediate between men and angels and to whom God has entrusted the custody of the elements. The good angels are in paradise -- Bambara ardjana, Arabic El-djanna -- up there in the blue sky and constitute the heavenly court of the Creator and sovereign Lord of all things, God -- Bambara Alla, Arabic Allah --, the cause of good and evil. God rules seven heavens and seven terrestrial globes placed one above the other, and the wicked angels

172 -- Bambara sétané, Arabic chéitane شَيْطَان -- are at open war with
176 Him; rooted in evil, powerful, and capable of harming and oppressing
177 human beings. They must nevertheless undergo eternal punishments in hell -- Bambara djahanéma /67/, Arabic djahannam جَهَنَّم -- in a fire compared to which, says the legend, ours would be only the little that would remain after seven consecutive washings with large quantities of water.

As this cursory glance indicates, both concept and words are strictly from the Koran. Can it be doubted that the Negro was taught all this by the Moslem? I have lived too long among the Negroes to take appearance for reality, and here once again I am wary of accepting the statements of our learned "travelers."

177 For centuries now, Islam has penetrated into the heart of Africa
181 and established itself in the midst of our Negro peoples; slow as its advance has been, it has not failed to leave its mark. The Bambara, the most important kernel of the Mande peoples, was always at war against the Moslem to safeguard his independence and the faith of his fathers (the wars were primarily religious). They were in turn conqueror and conquered, but most often conquered (for the Bambara, egoistic, plan their personal and individual interests before that of the group, and they always lacked cohesion and agreement, and never really had a leader at the top); they could not escape. Since they are nevertheless essentially deceitful, crafty, and hypocritical so that other peoples compare them to a piece of cow dung, dry outside but soft and loose inside so that it breaks and soils one as soon as a foot is placed on it -- and this comparison pleases them -- I do not hesitate to say that they took nothing from Islam that was not already in their minds. If they have taken Arabic terms to express themselves, I cannot doubt that this was purely diplomacy on their part. The use of Arabic terms that correspond to their own ideas in order to express their beliefs in present-day language represented adaptation and in no sense acceptance on their part. I would even assert that here they gave evidence, not of tact towards their conqueror (this is a quality which at the present time they do not possess even in an embryonic form), but of a certain pliability and shrewdness. In fact, by appearing before their tyrant on an equal footing with respect to dogma, they

177 avoided the stroke of the sword or slavery, kept their faith in fetishes
181 intact, and shielded both themselves and their /68/ children from all religious propaganda -- for what was there to teach them, what could they be taught that they did not know already?

177 The terms from the Koran have become familiar to them in
192 present-day language. Since they do not come from them and express primarily a concept rather than the thing itself, they have been able to use them with complete freedom, without failing in the respect due to the superior beings, their lords and gods, whose names are never spoken in vain or in an unsuitable name. Nowadays the words have become so Bambara that the people do not even suspect that they are foreign to their language, and have no cause to be surprised at them. The Bambara make anything their own that they feel translates their thought precisely, without giving much attention to the original meaning of the word, which they often do not know. Having
[576] heard the Moslem repeatedly cry out bismilahi, they thought it in good taste to make this exclamation in the anecdotes and stories that they tell, and for two or three years this has been the super-polite expression in "smart" society for inviting a guest to enter a hut and squat on the mat. In twenty years this word bismilahi بسم الله will have no other meaning! Even though it means "in the name of God," you would be laughed at if you were heard to say that it is an Arabic word with quite another meaning, just as you would waste your time telling a Negro that the expression "fou moi le camp" /"get out of here," literally "give me the camp."/ is plain /French/ slang. When a slave escapes, does one not say, "a bi fou moi (1) le camp?"

1. a: "he," bi: "is," fou moi le camp; the whole expression: "to desert."

It is a widely used expression known by everyone and is teamed with this other: ze ma fo, about which I pondered for several days, seeking to find its meaning. Yet nothing could be simpler; it is "I don't give a rap." /From the French je m'en fous/.

771 If the Bambara have fought to safeguard their independence,
181 they have done so primarily to preserve their faith and keep their fetishes. They have shown such great attachment for these, that their
[101] conquerors have described them as rebels and applied to them the epithet Bamba, synonym of Kafri. These religious struggles in themselves allow us to state as an indisputable fact that before the arrival of the Moslems the Bambara were animistic and sacrificed to genii. /69/

776 Did they have an exact and precise idea of their genii as they
811 do now? Apparently yes, for they always reasoned using themselves as a basis of comparison so that in their minds the invisible, impalpable genii to whom they sacrificed had a striking resemblance to man. It is not a man, and yet it is one, they say unable to define their concept or idea, ma si fa do (1).

1. Ma; "man"; si fa' "certain kind"; do; "it is."

776 The Moslem word djin translates this idea precisely, and the
782 Bambara use it in everyday language; but when the day of the sacrifice comes, they become unaware of it and there remains only one word -- ma, meaning "man." When they redden with blood the bark of
[824] the baobab (Adansonia digitata), the tamarind tree, the false cedar (family of the cedrelaceae), etc., to obtain the good graces and protection of the genie who dwells there, they always confer on it the title ma ("man"), and never that of djine. "Ma n'zira ba, ma n'tomi ba, ma djala ba; O great baobab man, O great tamarind tree man, O great false-cedar man!" begins the formula used by the sacrificer in offering victims and millet flour to the genie (2). They also have

114

2. In /J. Henry/, "Culte des esprits chez les Bambara /Spirit Worship among the Bambara/," Anthropos, Vol. III, No. 4 (1908), p. 1 /p. 702/, note 1, there is an error in translation.

114

Ma n'zira ba, etc., does not mean "great baobab of man." The real meaning is: "O man who is a great baobab." In writing it I prefer a "z" to an "a." Usually the Bambara [194] soften the hard sound by a euphonious little "n." With a hard "s" the word sira cannot be distinguished from the word "tobacco": sira siramougou, "snuff tobacco"; n'ziremougou, "baobab flour."

776 a purely Bambara term to express their idea /of these spirits/, and
782 they to the word djiné; they call them gnéna.

Before the arrival of the Moslems, the Negro sacrificed to beings
776 to whom they have attributed bodies and souls, although imponderable
782 and invisible, who are intermediate between men and angels and whom
177 the Arabs call الجن el djiné. But they also sacrificed to evil
798 beings, superior to the former in power, whom they call boli. The legend of the boli, an ironic legend which I will tell in full when I discuss this matter, is sufficient proof of this belief. For the Moslems of the Sudan only two things here below /70/ are worthy of attention: Mecca (Makka) and Stamboul -- old Abdul Hamid, Sultan of Constantinople -- who in their eyes, as in the eyes of all Moslems of our colonies, is the great Pope of Islam. Everything that does not bear the stamp of Mecca, everything that does not come from Stamboul, is to be rejected and scorned. Thus the Bambara, fertile in expedients, quickly managed to find a way out of their discussions with the propagators of Islam: "All our boli come from Mecca," was their weapon of war.

776 The Bambara were pursued from every side, unable to perform
177 publicly even religious ceremonies in honor of simple genii. Can
798 one believe that they added others that were still more terrible? As conquerors the Moslems have always ruthlessly opposed idolatry, destroying its temples and overthrowing its altars. "Believe or die" has always been their motto and always will be as long as they feel

776 strong. Is it not a fact that this law still operated forcefully at the
777 time of the last kings of Segou, when El-Hadj-Omar (1) took the
798

1. El-Hadj-Omar ("Omar the Pilgrim"), so named because, it is said, he made the journey to Mecca.

crown from the pagan king Mary to give it to his son Ahmadou (2)?

2. Bambara translation of the word Ahmed.

It was Ahmadou who held captive our explorers Mage and Quintin, and at the death of his father he left for Yamina and then for Nioro, leaving the crown to his son Madani. For those Bambara who were incautious, whose fetishes were seized, or who were caught sacrificing, the consequences were the confiscation of possessions, imprisonment, slavery, and death. The huge area where the native cemetery and
[764] the European cemetery (3) are found at present was soaked with the

3. There are two European cemeteries at Ségou. The first is at the entrance of the city on the south side. The second, the only one in which burial takes place at present, is on the edge of the native cemetery, south on the road from Sens and Koutiala, about 300 or 400 meters from the city.

blood of pagans. Who will ever know how many heads rolled at that time for a purely religious purpose! On some days the arm of the executioner stopped only because it was tired and unable to strike -- so I was told by some Negroes who owed their /71/ lives to this fatigue. And I believe them, for the greatest praise that the story-tellers /griots/ accord these tyrants is that they knew how to cut off heads. The legend that the boli came from Mecca was born inevitably

776 out of the Bambara's need to soften their crime of idolatry and to pre-
177 serve it by lending it extenuating circumstances. If the cradle of
798 Islam is Mecca, if its superiority is derived from the holiness of that city, chosen and beloved by God (1), what can the Moslems want of

1. See what I said above on the subject of Mecca and Stamboul.

him, the Bambara, whose religion comes from this same much vaunted city? And if the God of Whom the Moslems preached to the Bambara has decreed everything (2), good and evil, if He is the Author of both

2. See the Koran: VI, v. 3 - 39; X, v. 99; XIV, v. 4; XVII, v. 32; XXXVI, v. 6, 7, 8, 9; LIII, v. 43, 44, 45 - 49; LXXVI, v. 29; LXXX, v. 29; etc.

good and evil and leads each person along the course that pleases Him to such a degree that he no longer has freedom of choice, why wish to take from them that which God has given them, that which comes to them from the holy city of Mecca!

776 The Bambara term for the boli is gna. Their idea of them
796 corresponds closely to the Arab concept of the chéitane شيطان,
782 and in everyday language, they define them by a single word: sétané,
[792] "satan," even though this word is never on their lips in the sacrifices. In their nocturnal orgies and religious dances, the Negroes' notion of the genie to which they are sacrificing are shown in concrete form. And when, in their religious ceremonies in honor of the Komo, Kono,
[778] Nama, etc., the spirit appears by the glow of little fires lit in the sacred woods, decked out in a cloak of feathers, his head hidden in a huge horned mask that has nothing human about it, one cannot help
776 thinking of the tales of old Breton grandmothers, told on a winter
796 evening in the stables. The blasting of trumpets, bamboos, and koba
534 horns (3), the tinkling of /72/ the little bell, and the shouts of the
782

776
796
534
782

3. Formerly the trumpets and horns were ivory. The Moslem tyrants quickly had them confiscated, no doubt because they knew the price of an elephant tusk. At present the Bambara use only cattle horns and those of the koba, a large antelope which grows to the size of a fine heifer. (Koba is the word that designates this antelope in the Peul language; the Bambara call it dadjé, "white mouth," no doubt because it has two white lines on its jowls.)

crowd grip and terrify you and make you think yourself transported into the midst of a sabbath of long ago. When one has been present at these scenes, one does not doubt the veracity of the Negroes who say: "When the boli appears it is hideous and freezes with fear whoever sees it. It is as black as soot and its face disappears in a flame above which there are horns."

776
796
782

The face disappearing in a flame inevitably recalls the idea of an infernal spirit, and one who has been present at certain sacrifices to the Komo and the Nama, for example, and has heard the blasphemies of the sacrificer no longer doubts that it is Satan himself that is worshipped here. The blasphemies are repeated by all those present: Alla k'an bla, "may God leave us" (the real meaning: "We do not want God"); Alla djampa ba, "God is a great traitor" (meaning: "God makes promises and does not fulfill them, since he has decreed everything and his decrees are immutable"; A yé né djampa, "he has betrayed me," says a Negro of someone who has made him a promise and has not kept it). One is further convinced by being present at the sacrifice to Touafé Bla (1), one of the most ancient boli. The

1. The name Touafé Bla undoubtedly comes from the custom of suspending

776
796 this boli from the belt and hanging
782 it at the side along the thigh.

three most famous sorcerers, whose names -- Makono, Tjewolo, and Tjéba -- have been preserved, but whose origin is lost in the dark of ages, sacrificed to it by preference. This is the formula:

"Touafé Bla, Touafé Bla, the mountain of Touafé Bla is known, the trees of this mountain are known, I want to speak of the fire of its mountain. Touafé Bla, spare some houses (meaning: 'those of my friends') and go and kindle (your fire) in others (meaning: 'cast ruin and desolation among my enemies, among those who wish me ill'). Touafé Bla, favor me, and if I cannot see your fire, Touafé Bla, let me at least see the tip of its long column of smoke (meaning: 'you live in the fire; I cannot see your dwelling, but I can still know your power through the smoke of your fire, that is to say, /I shall know it/ if I am a witness of the misfortunes which you will cause to fall on my enemies and those whom I hate')." /73/

This formula shows us clearly that the boli, or gnâ, live in fire. The Negroes sacrificed to them before the arrival of the Moslems, and gave concrete form to their concept of the infernal spirit, just as they do today, by decking themselves out in a hideous horned mask and a cloak of feathers. Their blowing and shouting in the sacred woods on the days of great orgies have remained the same, and al-
[192] though they have taken the words sétané شَيْطَان, and djahanéma الْجَهَنَّم, from the Moslems, they have had the concept for a long time.

776 Now then, as to the Bambaras' knowledge of the Supreme Being,
181 God the Creator and Ruler, Lord of all, do they owe it to the Moslems?
596 The Bambara have too hierarchical a nature to need a master here! The youngest child is always the slave of the next older brother, who is the slave of an older one, and so the progression moves up invariably without ever changing, to the grey beard, the elder, the tjekoroba, a real fetish whom everyone obeys, whatever his stupidity, his narrowness of mind, or his lack of judgment.

In every family there is the same progression: the immediate lord of the children is their father, while he in turn bows before his

596
776 elders; and above them, as undisputed lord, soars the eldest, the
181 gouatigi, or head of the family.

All the gouatigi are subject to heads of quarters, led by the
776 dougoutigi, (1) or village heads; these obey the kafotigi, or heads of
181
631

1. The dougoutigi, or religious head of the village, takes precedence over the sotigi, or civil head. I believe that since the time of Carrier, administrator of the circle in 1901, this hierarchy as such has been officially done away with. It persists nevertheless, and the kafotigi and fama déou, priestly in character, secretly retain their prestige.

the canton, who in turn are governed by the fama déou, sons of the king or ministers. Such was the original organization of the Bambara, and all these petty chiefs, were absolute and uncontested lords, each in his own sphere.

776 Above them all there was the king, Fama or Massa (2), whose
181
631
643

2. The word Massa, used to designate the king, also means "great and powerful sorcerer." In the beginning the king really had absolute power, both civil and religious, and was really the prince or pope of fetishism. If he were not, would he have been given the title of Massa, "great priest," "great sorcerer?"

chief function was to allow himself to live in affluence and /74/ sweet idleness. He held all his subjects in his hands; all were his slaves, from the least to the highest, and he had the power of life and death over each and every one.

776 181 Before the arrival of the Moslem, the Bambara sacrificed to the gnéna, otherwise known as djiné, and to the gnâ, or sétané; and all these genii, whatever name one is pleased to call them, were arranged in a hierarchy as they are today. They were all divided into groups, each with its head, and these heads in turn formed other groups governed by a more powerful one. And if we conclude that the Bambara owes the concept of this hierarchy to the Moslem, would we not be saying that the latter pulled his sword from its sheath in order to strengthen the Negro in his fetishism? Would not we be admitting that he betrayed the Koran which commands him to destroy idolatry: "... kill them /idolators/ wheresoever you shall find them, and take them prisoners, and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place." (1) All the evidence permits us to say that this hierarchy in

1. Koran: chap. IX, v. 5.

the world of invisible beings comes from the Bambara themselves! How then can we believe that they stopped half-way, they who are always grouping and dividing? Is it possible that they did not attain the idea of the autocrat, the unparalleled one, God the sovereign Lord of the genii and sovereign Lord of the beings beneath them, of men and the rest of creation?

And when I study the Bambara hierarchy, I become aware that it is primarily religious! The gouatigi, or head of the family, is a priest; the Fama or Massa, the king, is a priest! Recognition of the genii and of the Creator must thus necessarily have preceded it.

Consequently, there is every reason to believe, not only that the Bambara had the idea of an only God, sovereign Lord of all before the arrival of the Moslems, but that this was their first belief.

776 In the mouth of a Bambara the word God has not nearly the breadth of meaning that we give it. They believe that although He sees all, knows all, and exercises His power everywhere, He is not really everywhere, for powerful, great, and immeasurable as He may be, He remains a "Being" which has quantity and dimensions; /75/ He is circumscribed and occupies space. From here the idea of good angels is only a step, and how easy it is for them to make it.

176 If on this earth the smallest of rulers, the least of potentates, is surrounded by servants and slaves, could the Creator be without them? If those who form the court of a king are superior to the gouatigi, or "family heads," to the dougoutigi, or "village heads," and to the kafotigi, or "heads of cantons," would those who form the celestial court be inferior to men, to genii, or to demons? The conclusion is perfectly natural; they would be superior to the latter, and to what will he /the Bambara/ compare them? Since they always in every way use themselves as a basis for comparison, they have only to think of themselves in order to remain logical in their conception of the world and to attribute to these beings the nature of their souls, their dousou, which they also call son. Is this not what they have done? When the Bambara define their idea of the soul and want to be understood, have they any other word than this very one, méléké, which they use to designate the angels? It is clear that they do not owe their concept [177] of heaven and the angels to the Moslems; they have appropriated from a foreign language a word which corresponded to a concept they already had, and that is all.

176 However, I am told that they have only one word to designate 177 the Divinity, the Only God, and that word is the Islamic term itself, 192 Alla. They have no other, and the first missionaries, doubtless 196 through ignorance of the pagans' hatred of the Moslems, adopted it, thus creating a hindrance to their ministry (1). Yes, Alla is the term

197 1. By translating as Alla both God and our concept of the Divinity, the first missionaries failed to establish the profound division which should exist between Catholicism and Islamism. The pagans regard the Catholic and the Moslem, as cousins, if not as brothers, and the word Alla is not irrelevant to this view. Because the Catholics believe in the Old Testament, they seem in the eyes of the Negro to border on Islamism, and the departure from it into Christianity

197 seems to them like membership in a sect derived directly from Islamism. The Moslems help with all their might to further belief in this nonsense. Therefore the missionaries should delete from their catechisms the word Alla for "God," as well as the ridiculous word mori for "priest," the word néma for "grace," etc., etc. -- in a word, all that is not Bambara.

176 they use in everyday language when they speak of God, but in the be-
177 ginning did they not have another, and do they not still have one at
192 present? /76/
196 I have always been surprised at the Negro's readiness to call a divine blessing by the name of its Author, and when in the winter he receives the blessing of blessings, the rain that makes plants sprout and the harvest grow, this is the way he expresses himself: "Alla bi fign, Alla bi na, Alla bi kouloukoulou, Alla bi yégé yégé, Alla do, etc., God darkens, God comes, God rumbles, God flashes, it is God," etc. These are purely metaphoric expressions, which mean: "The clouds gather; it will rain; the thunder rumbles; there are flashes of lightning, it is the rain."

I have found these metaphors on their lips also with exactly the same meaning but this time in Bambara words: "Sa bi fign, sa bi na, sa bi kouloukoulou, sa bi yégé yégé, sa do," the meaning is likewise: "The clouds gather; it will rain; the thunder rumbles; there are flashes of lightning; it is the rain." The word sa is strictly Bambara and so cannot reasonably be regarded as more recent than the Arab word; the Negroes therefore had it before they knew the word Alla. The word did not mean "cloud," "thunder," "lightning," or "rain," and there is every reason to believe that there was a time when it awakened in their minds a concept identical with that which the word Alla awakens in them at present, and that this word Alla from a foreign language is only used to express a concept long held by them.

776 What is the meaning of the word sa? Could it be the original
196 name of the Divinity? Since certain Bantu tribes have a high regard for snakes and dedicate a cult to them, some Europeans have wanted to see in it a translation of the word "snake." That is a great and fundamental error. The word sa, "snake," and the word sa in the sentences sa bi fign, sa bi na, etc., may have the same spelling, but
[194] the pronunciation is different. The hard "s" of sa, "snake," is pronounced by opening the teeth slightly and protruding the lips, and the word sa in sa bi fign, etc., is pronounced by closing the teeth and pulling in the lips. Thus, these are two quite distinct words. Moreover, to claim the snake is, or has been, the Bambara divinity seems to me a piece of stupidity. If they do not claim any bond of real or physical kinship even with the animals that are their taboo, one must believe a fortiori that they would not claim /77/ an animal, even a snake, as Creator and sovereign Lord. Some Bambara have it as a family taboo, and a branch of the Mandé people have such great respect for the python Minia (1) that now they are known only by the

776
825
101

1. The Baganda of Uganda before they became Christian venerated the snake as the dwelling place of a demon. Their snake has a great resemblance to the animals that are family taboos for the Bambara, or better still, to the python Minia, taboo of the Mande branch commonly known under the name of Minia-n-ka. Since the Minia-n-ka derive their name from the word Minia, name of the snake that is venerated and an object of public worship, some have insisted that the Bambara or Bamana derive their name from the word Bama, meaning "cayman" /a species of alligator/. If the cayman, Bama in

T76
P25
101

the Bambara language, had given its name to the people, this animal would be taboo for them, as the Minia is taboo for the Minianka, and the Mani or Mali, the hippopotamus, is taboo for the Malinke. None of this is true of the cayman in Bambara country; it is in no way the taboo of the tribe. Moreover, the word Bamana could just as well come from the word bama, a kind of tench /a fresh-water fish of the carp family/ which is found in abundance in the Bani and the Niger. This idea has not occurred to the partisans of the cayman, who undoubtedly are not familiar with the fish called bama. The word Bambara comes from the word bamba which means "rebel" and, in the mouths of the Moslems, carries the meaning of Kafri. Bambara means "the rebel who has never submitted to Islam," and the Negroes of the west speak of Bamako or Bambako, "the river of the rebels." Father Copte, a student of the Bambara recognized by the Negroes of the Ségou, quickly understood this fact and noted it in his accounts in the Annals of the White Fathers. Mr. De Lafosse, an administrator most conversant with the native laws, customs, and ways, recognized it also, and I share their opinion concerning the name Bambara.

T76
196

name of Minia-n-ka, the people of the Minia snake. But have the Minianka ever worshipped, or do they still worship, the snake as their

776 196 God, their supreme deity? They are not that stupid, the snake is an ordinary taboo, the dwelling place of a genie, an infernal spirit or a demon, and nothing more.

The word sa in the sentences sa bi fign, sa do, etc. ("the clouds gather, it is the rain," etc.), has a broad and vague meaning, indicating everything that is on high, everything that is above us. Was this word in the past the very name of the Divinity, as the word Alla is for many today? I do not think so. The word sa was the veiled term used to speak of the Divinity and, like the word Alla, it originally expressed a concept or an idea, and not a "being" at all.

Since, according to Bambara ideas, God is a spirit dwelling above us with His court and angels, the expressions sa bi na, sa bi /78/ fign, sa bi kouloukoulou, sa-dji, etc., should be interpreted to mean: "Min bé sa-n-fé bi na, Min bé sa-n-fé bi fign, Min bé sa-n-fé bi kouloukoulou, Sa-n-fe ta dji -- He Who (the spirit which) is up above comes (will favor us with His blessing of rain); He Who is above darkens (gathers clouds); He Who is above rumbles (makes His voice heard); the water of Him Who is above."

776 196 192 The supreme blessing that the Divinity, the Supreme Being, grants to human beings, is rain. As I shall demonstrate in a moment, the Bambara were unable to speak the name of their God and in their gratitude used a metaphor. Their fact that their metaphor, Alla bi na, Alla bi fign, is identical to the one in which the word sa appears, i.e., sa bi na, sa bi fign, etc., leads me to think, nay forces me to think, that in the beginning the word Alla expressed less an individual or a being than an idea or a concept. For I must confess that although some of our Bambara have the very ideas of the Moslems concerning God and the word Alla, there are more whose ideas on this subject remain confused, and for the majority God or Alla is nothing more than the arch of heaven (1), a covering which hides from us a "Spirit,"

1. To pagan Negroes, God is a spirit Who is everywhere, sees everything, but remains ens quantum. He dwells on high, is as large as the celestial vault, and because He hovers above us

776
196
192

> sees everything. The old men explain this to you with an intensity that proves their good faith, and children recite the sayings of the old men with a frankness so naive that one cannot misunderstand it.

a Being endowed with reason and all powerful. The term is the translation of the word sa.

It is apparent that in the beginning the word Alla in no way meant a Being or an Individual; it simply expressed a concept, an idea already known, accepted and translated by the word sa, and the Bambara simply adopted a foreign word corresponding to their own concept.

776
196
192
551
576
[687]

If to the Bambara the word Alla had meant the Divinity Himself, the Supreme Being, would they ever have dared to speak it, to make it their own? I cannot bring myself to believe that they would, among them the name of a powerful person, a religious chief, or venerated being is never spoken in vain or in an unsuitable manner. If some of their kings, among them /79/ N'golo, not to mention others, punished anyone caught speaking his /the royal/ name by fines and prison, cast them into slavery, and even beheaded them as guilty of the crime of lese majesty, what would they not have to fear from the Creator if they spoke His name in vain and inappropriately! Furthermore, it is a widespread custom to avoid speaking the name of one who is feared or venerated.

576
551
595

No well-bred and self-respecting woman ever speaks the name of her husband. She speaks of him as né tigi ("my master"), so tigi ("the master of the house"). Most frequently she adorns him with a borrowed name, a bougna toua, or name of respect, and a polygamist has several such names, each wife giving him one of her own invention.

In well-brought-up families -- and most of them are (1) -- the

> 1. Our Bambara Negroes have great respect for the members of their families and are considerate of them;

576
551
595

> in this respect they are far superior to any of the Arabs of Algeria, for example. Family life is more open and cordial among them.

children do not speak the name of their father, especially if he is a gouatigi, or family head, and when a swarm of children are enjoying themselves around their old daddy, only one word is on all the little lips to awaken his attention, avoid his reprimand, call for his caress, and bring forth his smile: Koké-yo -- koké-wé! (2)

> 2. I use the word Koké-yo -- (Né koké) koké we (koké, "I beg you, Koké") -- because it is the most common; there are obviously other similar terms. Favorite wives also like to call their husbands by this name. For everyone it is a term of respect and at the same time it is tender, affectionate, and coaxing.

[888] 576 551 Old men are given borrowed names, bougna toua, out of respect and veneration, and the reason for this practice is to avoid having to speak their names in vain and unsuitably. The practice is current, and it is even carried to an extreme, for although a child is given a respect name within his family, he is never called by that name. How many people there are whose real name is not known except by close [553] relatives and friends! All the Dougoutigi, To-n-tigi, Ba-koroba, and Moké-touama received a name on the eighth day after their birth, and the names used to designate them are borrowed names. /80/

888 793 576 551 In the environs of Ségou, where Islam is widespread and spreads farther every day, the sacrificers to the protecting genii of the villages, the gnéna-n-sonna ba, or dougoutigi, have lost some of their prestige, but anyone who respects them, even if he be a Moslem, never speaks their names. At the present time in Bani country, where the old customs and traditions are preserved with jealous care, there is not a

888 793 576 551 child, woman, or young man that can tell you the name of the great sacrificer of the village if the latter is in the least old. Out of respect and veneration his name is never spoken; he is the head, and if they are questioned all will answer: "Toua si t'a la dougoutigi ko, he has no other name than that of dougoutigi, head of the village." And, in fact, most of the people know no other name for him.

551 576 770 This need to avoid speaking the name of whosoever is respected, venerated, or feared goes so far as to bring about the abbreviation of phrases customarily used in salutations (1), so it can easily be imagined

1. See what I said in this connection in the preceding chapter, /section on/ "Reincarnation of Souls," pertaining to Ouentja.

that the name of the fetishes is not known except by their masters and their initiates. Of course, a Moslem, a woman, an uncircumcised man, or an unexcised woman can tell you the number of the gnéna and gnâ owned by the village, and they also know whether the gnéna (djiné) include a Dasiri, Ngolo, Koté, Ntomo, Tauri, etc., and whether the gnâ (boli, sétané) include a Komo, Nia, Douga, Kono, Nama, Bala, etc. But except for the initiates, who could tell you that a certain boli is called Sélé, Magné, Toroba, Dono, or Nono, or that the Magna is also called Tjarofign and the Nama, Sirima-n-fign? Only the generic name is known, and it is in good taste not to pronounce even that when extending an invitation to a festival in its honor. The Nama is enclosed in a beehive in the shade of a tamarind tree, which in turn are enclosed in coarse mats, and when an invitation is given to the sacrifice, the most stylish formula is: "Come and see us, an bi djasé (2) son, we are sacrificing to the /81/ palisade." The trumpet

2. Djasé, name of a palisade composed of large mats. Children born at the time of the sacrifices to the Nama, who are dedicated to the fetish, are frequently given the name

551
576
778

Djasé instead of Nama or Namakoro. The Nama is sometimes surrounded by a wall instead of mats. This is extremely unusual, and I have seen only one sanctuary of this kind, at Dougoutigila in the Bani /region/.

of the Komo is of iron, so one says: "An bi nége son, we are sacrificing to the iron." A fetish can give health in the sense that it can refrain from causing sickness if it is a gnâ, or it can actually give health and well-being if it is a gnéna; thus the expression used most frequently is: "An ta foura bi son, we are sacrificing to our cure," or again: "An ta foura bi djigi so, our cure is paying us the honor of a visit."

776 Are we here dealing with a recent custom, which dates from the arrival of the Moslem? I cannot accept this idea, for all the evidence indicates that it antedates presence, I believe without hesitation that the name of the Divinity or Supreme Being was never spoken by the Bambara, that they were not permitted to pronounce it. It is not surprising, then, that the name should gradually have been lost, erased from their memories so that it is unknown at present.

Moreover, since the Bambara God was without priest, altar, or sacrifice, was there any need to speak His name? According to their ideas, the gnéna or djiné are beings intermediate between men and angels, put in charge of the elements by the Divinity and delegated by Him to distribute His favors and His punishments to human beings; would it then be foolish and presumptuous to believe that since the beginning he only addressed God through the mediation of the gnéna or djiné? I cannot doubt that the Bambara implored the djiné to present their homage and worship to their Lord, the Lord of the whole universe, to their Tigi ani fen bé tigi yé, as the sorcerers always say in their liturgical ceremonies. The latter are the watchful guardians of the ancient formulas and customs; that is the source of all their prestige.

Moreover, the worship of the gnéna, or djiné, antedates that of the gnâ (boli or sétané). It has no history; its origin is lost in the darkness of the ages, and in this fact I see a new reason to believe that they were the first intermediaries between man and God.

111 The better one knows the Bambara, the more one studies their
177 beliefs in the light of their practices, considering them from their own way of thinking, seeing, feeling, and envisaging things, the more one is convinced that they owe none of their concepts to the Moslems. They have only taken from their conquerors certain words /82/ from the Koran, and these they have adopted to express themselves. They are words which corresponded to their ideas and which, being foreign to their language, remained terms that conceal.

112 It is a curious and surprising fact that certain Moslem truths
177 suited to make an impression on their minds, such as hell, paradise, the judgment of the soul followed by reward or punishment, the end of the world, etc., have always left them cold and indifferent. Had they, perhaps, lost this concept by the time of the Moslems' arrival so that all this was new to him?

112 What does hell matter to the Bambara! Should they fear this consuming fire compared to which ours would be only the remains from a seventh washing (1)? To begin with, they believe in the reincarnation

1. Definition of hell: A douga ko wolonoula, min bi to a wolonoula ko, an tassouma flé nin yé, literally: "it to extinguish washing seventh that which is left to it seventh (washing) after our fire, look, that is it."

of souls, and this belief protects them from all these tortures, and if some Negroes think of hell, they think of it without trembling. To deserve it, one must insult the gnéna or djiné, or the gnâ (boli, sétané), or be a monster to the point of denying all the laws of justice and hospitality. The occasions for sacrificing to the gnéna and to the gnâ are too frequent always to go unnoticed, their fears of the fetishes are too numerous for anyone continuously to refuse the hen and the kola nut to the invisible tyrants. And is there any monster here below whose heart is not at one time or another moved, touched, or seized with compassion for the weak? Where is the rough, rude being who is ashamed to offer a glass of water to the passing traveler or, even

772 more, to a brother, one of his people? It is more difficult for a Bambara to deserve hell than to avoid it; thus they need not think about it and never do think about it.

Paradise hardly absorbs their thoughts more. The thought that they are called upon to contemplate the Creator, to live near Him and rejoice in Him, has not touched them for a long time; they have evolved too far; they have reached the last runs of degradation, and to go lower they would have to be Moslems. Furthermore, the paradise of Mohammed seems absurd to them! That indecent corps of virgins with modest looks and beautiful black eyes, whose color makes them resemble ostrich eggs carefully hidden in the sand (2), leaves them

2. Koran, Chap. XXXVII - v. 47.

indifferent. They still prefer the ones here below, undoubtedly on the principle /83/ that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" /literally: "one good thing that you have is worth 36 that you will have"/. Virginity is too beautiful for the Bambara to have a word [83] for it; it is the flower of a day which a girl of ten no longer has. And what does it matter to them whether a woman is young or somewhat [562] mature, virgin or not, pretty or ugly; to them a woman, a real one, is a good servant, a good cook, and one who provides carnal pleasure at a man's will without ever tiring.

The pleasures and joys of this earth suffice for the Negro; he wishes for no others, and no doubt that is why he believes in a perpetual return. If, when barely in the grave, he already lives again in the womb of a woman, could the idea of judgment after death, the idea of the end of the world and a new judgment, make an impression on his mind? Can he who lives again and again conceive of the end of the world?

773 It is senseless to speak of their knowledge of Adam, father of the human race, and of Eve, his wife. The Bambara meaning of the 829 words Adama (Adam) and Awa (Eve) are quite different from the one we give them. When a missionary, a Moslem, or any European introduces himself to them as the son of Adam and Eve, these words are to them generic terms denoting the first father and the first mother

773 of a race, but not words that denote the first father and mother of the
829 human species. A pure Bambara does not believe in the unity of mankind; God created the white man white and the black man black, to use his expression, and to each He has given a father and a mother of his own color.

829 Nor has the arrival of the Europeans and the Moslems changed
582 any of his ideas in this respect. For many, each tribe and each caste had a first father and a first mother, and if there are castes which cannot be united by marriage, this seems to me to be the reason. "An té sé, a yé noumoy yé an yé Bamana déou yé an té si (1) kélé-n-yé,

1. Si: "similar" or "like nature;" "of the same race, descent, origin, people, nature."

we cannot marry each other, he is noumou (blacksmith) and we are not of the same people, the same blood, the same stock, the same father." Some seem to me very explicit when they say: "Án té fa kélé-n-yé, we are not of the same father." /84/

Chapter 5

000 Fetishism among the Bambara; The Worship of the Gnéna Classification of the Gnéna, Who are Identical with the Arab Djiné

1. What is Meant by Gnéna or Djiné

776 The Supreme Being, the Bambara God, lives up above behind the blue sky, gliding through happy and quiet days with his celestial band, the good angels (méléké) that form His court, and, omnipotent though He is, He is without priest or sacrifice. For He concerns Himself very little with men. He has divided the dominion of creation with the djiné, His laws, which are immutable, He has decreed once

776 and for all, and since then He has simply lived, resting in sweet "idleness" .... Let us not think, however, that the Negro is without religion; he is excessively religious and he spends his life sacrificing, squandering flour, and scattering the blood of victims uselessly, for the sole benefit of vultures.

Believing that he can expect nothing from God, he calls upon the djiné or gnéna who are in charge of the elements, each having absolute power in its sphere. Doubtless the latter are unable to change the whole universal order established by the Creator and Soverign Lord of all things -- au tigi ("our Lord") ani fen /85/ bé tigi yé ("and Lord of all things") --, but they can grant a material (1) blessing, turn away

[782] 1. A Negro does not have the idea of asking a supernatural blessing.

a misfortune, and reward or punish.

The gnéna is reminiscent of the djin of the Koran (Chap. VI, XXX, VIII, XLI). It is a being intermediate between men and angels. "Ma si fa do do, it is a kind of man," say the Negroes, and in fact it does resemble a man since it eats, drinks, amuses itself, marries, and has children. /2/ Many even believe them /gnéna/ to be clothed,

2. In the sacrifices it is called ma, "man," and the name of the object in which it is found is added to this word. Thus ma djala ba, "great false-cedar man," etc. /No text reference to this footnote. Tr:/

and in the late evening it is not unusual to hear a storyteller /conteur/ say of them: "Sanou b'oufé. Wari b'oufé. Bagi fana b'oufé. They have gold. They have silver. They also have fabrics." Above all they have might! They are powerful, and although some people wear 776 751 little bags of cloth or leather and strings with seven and nine knots -- as amulets --, and claws of wild animals, deer and goats horns, tafo

of leather wrapped in the hide of an anteater or monkey, etc. -- as talismans -- which protect them from their blows; although there are diviners, sorcerers, and certain hunters and blacksmiths (noumou), etc., on whom these invisible beings have no hold, it is nonetheless true that they are feared, held in awe by all, that they are honored and their good graces sought. Moreover, they give good luck, good fortune, and success to their friends and preserve them from a host of evils -- spells, sorcery, poverty, sickness, etc. -- springing from an enemy's rancor.

The worship of the gnéna, beings intermediate between angels and men, is among the oldest. Its origin is lost in the dark of the ages, and, unlike that of the boli or gnâ, of which I will speak later, it has no history. Since they are not all equally strong and powerful, I have divided them into three main groups: those that live in the bush, those that roam in the villages and their environs, and finally those that are really interested in the Bambara and actually protect them. /3/ /86/

3. See Anthropos, Vol. III (1908), part 4 /J. M. Henry, "Le Culte des esprits chez les Bambara (Spirit Worship among the Bambara). There is no text reference to this footnote which appears on text page 85. Tr./

2. Gnéna Who Dwell in the Bush

These /gnéna/ hide in thickets and perch on trees, and they are terrible only during the day, at high noon and in the greatest heat. Woe to him who at that time disturbs them in their walks, climbs on the trees they have chosen for a home, or tries to prune the branches on which they are frolicking or resting. They do not like children at all! For these little vandals, always running and climbing to catch lizards, rob nests, and stuff themselves with fruit, they have reserved violent headaches and stomach-aches. Often, too, they make them lame, blind, deaf and dumb, crazy, etc., and there is no village where one is not shown some of their victims (1).

776

1. To understand this belief of the Negro, read the chapter on sickness and death.

The most famous and terrible of all these invisible little beings of the bush, who are without official minister or priest but to whom many offerings nevertheless are made, is the wokolo. It is black as soot, with a skin like a monkey's, and no larger than an infant of one or two months. It likes to appear, and one can say that no Negro reaches thirty without having seen it. Although sometimes during the most severe heat or in the evening by the light of the moon, it runs along the banks of the river, throwing into the stream its tiny line, almost invisible and finer than a hair, it prefers the bush and the butter tree; the karité (Bassia parkii) is its prime favorite. With quiver slung over its shoulder and bow always strung, it lies in wait, and woe betide anyone who comes by and disturbs it. To defeat it and force it to beat a retreat, the one who comes upon it must greet it as soon as he sees it, but usually it is invisible and shoots him with its arrow, an arrow so small that he does not even feel it penetrate the flesh. It is this [753] arrow that causes the deep pussy abscesses (2) from which our Negroes

2. Like all superstitious and weak-minded people, the Negro believes that he has actually seen what are but imaginary dreams and wishes.

suffer.

Many of these invisible beings have no name. The least sociable are those that live in the false cedars, for to subdue them /87/ one must be a noumou (blacksmith), a koulé (digger of canoes, mender of gourds), etc. Only such persons dare to deal the first stroke of the ax to these trees and cut them down (1).

[788]

1. Before doing so they recite a formula, and the first stroke of the ax is dealt by the chief of the blacksmiths, etc., or his deputy.

776 3. Gnéna Who Roam the Village and Its Environs

These gnéna like especially to sit where paths cross and somewhat resemble the gnâma, even though they are different (2). They

2. See what I said about the gnâma in the first chapter.

protect from spells and sorcery, give health and exorcise sickness, and it is not unusual in the morning at daybreak or in the evening just as the sun is about to disappear to see men and especially old women sprinkling a little clear water here and there at a crossing of paths. They are interceding for children and grandchildren or for a member of the family who is sick and lying on his mat, or they are imploring the gnéna to protect them from an enemy or an evil spell, or to shelter them from the gnâma.

776 782 Although these gnéna have no official priest, they nevertheless receive many gifts, and there is no circumcised man who does not feel obliged to make them his small offering, at one time or another. At crossings of paths one throws them preferably flour mixed with water, cowrie shells, milk, hatching eggs, ashes of herbs and plants, gruel, kola nuts, and sorghum cakes. At children's festivals the fodder is thrown to them in greater abundance; the cakes pile up at the entrance of the village (to the great joy of dogs and hens), and the ground is moistened with a light dew of blood (3). On the second day of the

776 782 304 262

3. All these offerings are made by the order of a sorcerer and are called saraka. See what I have said about the saraka in Chapter IV, Section I, "Belief in God."

drinking bout, which corresponds to the festival of the كبش (sheep), the soli girls, who are shortly to be excised, throw them the remains of the basi k'li in great handfuls without counting. Basi k'li is the name given to the repast provided for the whole village on this

776 day by the soli (those who are to be excised). It is a kind of semolina
782 (very fine couscous called basi) which is eaten with an /88/ extremely
304 spicy sauce of smoked fish. It is called basi k'li because, in order to
262 provide this repast, the little girls are obliged to run from door to door, clapping their hands, singing and begging (k'li).

776 Among the invisible wanderers, there is one which is strongly
825 reminiscent of our "werewolf." It is the souroukou, an imaginary
514 hyena, whose supposed existence has brought about a strange practice. Every evening one sees groups of little boys and groups of little girls, turning aside a little into the bush: they all go in a band to take their last precautions and attend to the wants of nature -- union is strength even against the gnéna.

776 Many other gnéna are among this group that roams the village; they flutter in the b'lon, or entrance huts, they live in horrible filth, hung over doors, on the walls, and on the posts that support the terrace roofs, and the only hangings to be seen anywhere are eggshells, heads of millet, fruit pits, and seeds from the bush, which are offered to these friends as saraka. Nor are private huts without them, for the gnéna roll in the ashes of the hearth, snore on the mats, and take the air in the conari (1); there are some everywhere.

[415] 1. The conari is a baked earth receptacle used for water, beer, and cooking food.

Finally, there are gnéna or djiné who are powerful. Without mercy for their enemies, whom they abandon to all kinds of sorcery and evil spells, they are full of both attention and consideration for their friends. They can cause sickness, poverty, and other calamities to descend on a family, a village, or a whole region; but they can also side with them against a visible or invisible enemy; they can protect them, exorcise anything, and grant real blessings to each and all. The characteristic trait of the gnéna, in fact, is not that they can refrain from doing harm, but that they can also do good directly by performing a good act. Some choose to live in a rock, others prefer a knoll or a large tree near the village, and there are those who

776 do not disdain to frolic in the bottom of a well or pond and keep cool there. These last are put in charge of the elements in a very special way. Although endowed /89/ with a divine virtue, they are still far from gods and are only intermediaries between human beings and the Divinity. This last idea seems to be in the background, almost disappearing, and yet, if one has the patience to listen to the old men and let them express themselves, one quickly sees that they still have it, even though ill defined and very confused, and one can believe that in the beginning the worship of the gnéna was a direct worship, offered to the Divinity through their mediation. Men, women, children, everybody takes part in the worship of the gnéna; although there is one, koté (kouéré in Bani), whose mysteries are veiled, its sect is only semioccult, and the entire population takes part in the festivals held in its honor. Barring a formal order from the sorceress or the 776 812 impossibility of obtaining items in the liturgical (1) color, everything

1. The reason for a failure to conform to the liturgy is always announced before a saraka or a sacrifice.

used in this worship -- victims, kola nuts -- is white, and among the Negroes white is the symbol of innocence and purity.

776 "Primitive peoples admit the existence of superhuman powers," 782 says Nicolay. "When these are supposed to inhabit certain objects in the form of spirits, genii, etc., that is animism." /*/ This

/* Fernand Nicolay, Curiosite's des lois et coutumes - Histoire des croyances, superstitions, moeurs, usages et coutumes (selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. The History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Ways, Practices, and Customs (according to the outline of the Decalogue). Vol. I, prop. 13. Paris: V. Retaux, 1901./

776 definition fits closely with what we have said about the gnéna, and the
782 worship of these genii is indeed animism and not idolatry. And since, according to Burton, fetishism is less adoration than a propitiation of animate or inanimate objects to which a mysterious power is attributed, the sacrifices and saraka offered by the Bambara to their genii are acts of propitiation rather than of worship.

776 To give the reader a more precise notion of the worship of the gnéna -- and they are legion -- I will divide the powerful ones, those of the third group, into eight categories: the genii of ponds, springs, and wells; the genii of the crops; those who protect children; and those who protect circumcised youths; the genii of the women, that of twins; the dasiri, protector of villages; and the koté or kouéré, a special genie of a semioccult sect. All these genii have their priests, their sacrifices, and their saraka, but since all are not equal in strength and power, the extensiveness and formality of worship is not the same with respect to all. /90/

4. Genie of Ponds, Springs, and Wells

776 There are genii splashing around in all ponds, springs, and wells,
782 and our Negroes think that in order to obtain their good graces they
823 are obliged from time to time to offer them a trickle of /millet/ flour and water, the blood of a white hen, or a mouthful of chewed kola nut. On the edge of a well, at the mouth of a spring, on the edge of a pond, and finally on the banks of a river, offerings, sacrifices, and saraka are made, and their purpose is to prevent our Kneippist genii from escaping. If they leave displeased they take with them the water without which people cannot live, and the spring dries. There is total drought, a terrible misfortune -- for what can become of them without water!

The sacrificer to the water genii is quite often the head of the family on whose land the spring is located. Usually this honor goes by right to the head of the quarter; there are even villages where the sacrificer is none other than the religious head of the village, the gnéna-n-sonnoba /sic/, who is priest of the dasiri, the genie protector of the village.

776 782 823 Most frequently these genii are given saraka, but a hen is sacrificed each time the wells are cleaned: it is in good taste to do so, and few villages depart from the rule. Once a year a public sacrifice is offered to them, with a degree of formality that varies according to whether the sacrificer is merely the head of a family, the head of a quarter, or the head of the village. Since the women spend a good half of their lives around the wells, they are almost everywhere the ones who provide the materials for the sacrifice.

5. Genii of the Crops

776 241 782 When planting time comes, the Bambara, who are farmers above all, blossom out with sacrifices and redden just about everything with blood. The head of the family does not forget the genie of the seed. He offers it a saraka at home and sometimes a sacrifice, and unless he is very old and helpless he appears at the field on the day when the first pinch of seed is consigned to the earth. Before /91/ the /sowing/ is begun a hen's blood must be offered to the genie of fertility, which is responsible for watching over the seed and causing it to sprout and grow, and it is he that makes this offering, unless he has delegated this duty to his eldest son or his brother (the one next after him in seniority).

The departure for the field at planting time has its own unique characteristics. A child (if there is one in the family, obviously) is given the gourd (1) containing the seed, and in the name of the genie

1. A pumpkin cut in two, emptied and dried in the sun.

the father gives him orders and admonitions. On the way out of the hut the child pays his respects to the shades of his ancestors by placing the gourd on the threshold, and leaves quickly, proud as Artaban. He must be careful not to stop on the way unless he has to, and, above all, he must keep silent so that the spirits that fly here, there, and everywhere remain ignorant of what he is carrying and cannot attack the seeds in the millet grain. Anyone who talks runs a grave

776 risk of spoiling the crop -- o be gno soun tigné ("it destroys the vitality
241 of the seed of the millet grain").
782 These genii do not have special festivals in the course of the year. Their priests, the heads of families, offer them saraka and sacrifices at planting time, and some of them sacrifice a hen in the corner of the field while the crop is sprouting and growing, but that is all.

6. Genii Protectors of Children

89 It is not until circumcision that Bambara children take part in
794 the mysteries of pagan worship, but they are early prepared for it so
776 that they may be introduced to the law of secrecy which they must strictly adhere to later when they are initiates of an occult sect. At about the age of seven or eight years, they become affiliated with an association worshipping the genii responsible for protecting them. All these sects are alike, differing only in name. On the banks of the
[825] Bani and the Niger, the object of worship is the tauri (toad or frog), and the croaking of this animal is imitated in their festivals; some villages have the djara (lion) and imitate its roar by whirling their
[534] slingshots, small boards four fingers wide and one to two centimeters long, attached to the end of a string. The most widespread /children's
[824] genie/ is n'tomo, which undoubtedly gets its name from the tree in which it lives (the /92/ jujube tree, n'tomo). It makes children hale and hearty, preserves them from sickness, defends them against the invisible little creatures of the bush, against spells and sorcery, and makes them strong, steadfast, and impervious to suffering.

The confraternity of the n'tomo is modeled after that of the boli. (This is true of both kinds -- for there are two; a white costume is worn to the dance for n'tomo djé and a black costume for n'tomo fign). In order to be admitted one must offer a hen to the child who is head of the n'tomo (the n'tomotigi), prostrate oneself before the tree of the genie, and swear to keep the secret and never to speak of the n'tomo to the uninitiated, especially not to little girls.

869 794 778 In addition to wearing the costume, which is white (n'tomo djé) or yellow, black, etc. (n'tomo fign), the boy who dances the dance of the genie hides his face in a frightful wooden mask on top of which are five, seven, and sometimes eight horns.

869 794 561 The n'tomo injects a whole organization into the world of children. They quite naturally divide themselves into small groups, each corresponding to a circumcision that is to take

[291 293]

Child wearing the loincloth called yaba.

place, and are thus all of the same age, born in the same year, or very nearly so. The member of each group who is the oldest -- be it by only one day -- becomes its head, and all the younger heads obey the head of the oldest group, the n'tomotigi, and his aide, the n'tomotigi siéré (1), who is drawn from

1. Siéré, "aide," "deputy."

the group which will be circumcised after that

of the n'tomotigi. /93/

These two children prepare the hunts for rats and lizards, organize the games and supervise them, and if an offence is committed by the band, it is up to them to discover the culprit. When quarrels, arguments, and fights arise among the children, they intervene, judge each case, and, if the matter is worth the trouble, the mischief-maker, or the one who is declared responsible, is severely beaten. All this

Mask of the n'tomo, the children's fetish.

produces unity within the various groups and prevents them from coming to blows at every moment.

The little girls also have an organization into groups; but it lacks cohesion; it would have to be religious in nature, since religion is the basis of all unity in the Bambara country. Only at the time of excision does all this change, and then there is real cohesion among them.

Every year children sacrifice to the n'tomo genie through the mediation of their head, the n'tomotigi. The day of the sacrifice is a day of great rejoicing which ends in flagellation. The material for

796 the sacrifice is furnished by the children themselves; all of them to-
857 gether work a small field for this purpose during the winter, and if the harvest is not sufficient, they go begging from door to door so that nothing will be lacking at the feast -- neither d'lo, the millet beer, nor kola nuts. On the evening of this great day, each new initiate chooses his n'golo mouso, as they call the little girl each one takes as his "sister of the heart," his bonne amie as one would say in France /his girlfriend/. But she is more; she is a little maid of all work, and the gift which he gives her every year at the celebration is more a payment than a gift of friendship, "pure and simple." /94/

7. The Genie Protector of Circumcised Youths

791 At circumcision the Bambara leave the association of the n'tomo
776 and place themselves under the protection of more powerful genii.
778 These genii are all of the same nature, only the name differs with each region, and all the confraternities are copied after one and the same model. The most widespread is that of the n'golo (1).

1. In Bani it is the n'goso rather than the n'golo.

The n'golo is nothing but two forked branches fastened together and hung on a light dloma (2). One can meet it quite often in a

[342]

2. Dloma are forked sticks on which rest the crossbars or beams that hold up the flat terrace roofs. The name dloma is given to all forked sticks, small and large.

corner of the village, out of doors, but usually it is under a small shed or hut. This genie gives the youths not only strength, vigor, and health, but also the talent, if not of pleasing women, at least of attracting them and thus being able to obtain some crude satisfactions. It helps the unmarried to meet the girl of the moment, and thanks to it,

794 a married man finds his wife gentle, submissive, and obedient. It
776 preserves the members from disgraceful ailments and, in a quite
778 special manner, from ma ko sa (3), a paralysis of the reproductive

3. Ma, "man"; ko, "affair," "parts," "testicles"; sa, "dead," "lifeless."

organ.

794 This group of worshippers forms the foundation of the organization of the fla-n-to (4), headed by the to-n-tigi (5) who is the master of

4. To, "gruel"; fla, "for"; flani, "twins of the same age."

5. To, "gruel"; tigi, "head."

the n'golo fetish. His assistants before the genie help him with his duties; he has a siéré, or aide, a djéli, who is a kind of herald and repeats his orders, advice, and thanks during the days of celebration and drinking bouts, and a djalatiké, responsible for seeing that the rules or laws of the organization are kept. Among the Negroes nothing is done without drinking and eating; they must have celebrations and drinking bouts, and in order to obtain the means for them the fla-n-to impose a large number of fines on their members, the to-n-dé (6).

6. To; "gruel"; "child."

Their rules are /95/ nevertheless odd. For example, a fine is imposed on whoever blows his nose or sneezes, gets up from the table, or starts eating before commanded to do so by the head, the tontigi. Those who are late for the dance or sleep during the day or night of a celebration are granted no mercy! (1)

1. When the tondé organize a dance or celebration, everyone must be present and spend a sleepless night.

794 The to-n-dé, or members of the association, are formed into groups, each corresponding to a circumcision, and all these groups, united among themselves by a common bond, which is the worship to be rendered to the n'golo genie, submit to and obey the head, the n'golo tigi, preferably called to-n-tigi. Thanks to this unity, a host of quarrels and fights is avoided, and they all help each other, sharing in the joys and sorrows of their fellow members. In a word, this association corresponds, in miniature, to our societies of mutual assistance and help.

794 To get a girl of the moment, the young to-n-dé from time to
796 time sacrifice a small pullet. But a big sacrifice is made yearly and the victim is at least a goat; it is offered in the name of all. The offering of the general sacrifice does not prevent each initiate from adding a hen and a kola nut; food abounds, millet beer flows in streams, the association furnishes food and drinks to the whole village and to friends from surrounding villages. On this day also the youths circumcised during the year enter the confraternity of the n'golo and become to-n-de, or members of the organization of the fla-n-to. To do so they must spend from 80 to 120 cowrie shells (2 to 3 sous) and offer to the fetish the hen and two kola nuts as a sacrifice.

8. The Women's Genie

796 Not all villages possess this fetish tree, which is called mouso
824 ka djiri (2), but all hamlets have a genie whose chief function is to

2. This tree is often a fig tree called n'zoro or a toro sycamore (ficus vogelii, ficus ferruginosa). Mouso means "woman"; ka is particle indicating possession; djiri means "tree"; the whole phrase therefore means "the tree of the women."

preserve the freshness of youth in the ladies for a long time, to give mothers breasts that are loaded with /96/ milk, to bring fertility to the sterile, and finally to keep an eye on the periods, or menses, of each and every one. Every month at the new moon the excised women, married and unmarried, spend an entire night dancing in its honor, to the beat of a special drum called mouso denou (1). These dances

1. Mouso, "woman"; denou, "drum."

are not very decent, and except for some shameless individuals who watch even these scenes from the height of the flat terrace roofs, the men among the Bani stay at a distance.

Many villages (and they are numerous in Bani country) believe that the genie takes shelter in a fig tree near the walls and establishes its home there. It is the trunk of this tree that is reddened with blood at the annual festival, and most of the dances take place in its shade, as does the repast of which the Negro women partake on this occasion. The girls excised during the year spend 80 to 120 cowrie shells, offer a pullet for the sacrifice, and are thereafter permitted to pay their respects to the genie.

Out of this group of worshippers arises a small mutual aid society, identical in every way with the youth's association, the fla-n-to. The head of this organization is usually the oldest woman of the village, and she is given the title of massa, "queen." All the female population call her mba, "my mother."

This society, called mouso-n-to (2), from time to time offers

2. Mouso, "woman"; to, "gruel."

the people of the village d'lo, or millet beer, and once a year at the festival of the genie a plentiful repast with a dessert of kola nuts for the old and the usual drinking bout for everyone. Those who break the laws of the association are fined, and the sum of all these fines, together with the 80 or 120 cowrie shells spend by the excised girls of the year, help the massa and her associates to meet all expenses.

9. The Twins' Genie

845 776 Having twins is far from an unmixed blessing for Bambara women. Those whom I have seen afflicted with this good fortune and honor (for it is one, since it is regarded as /97/ a blessing from the Supreme Being, the Creator) have seemed to me greatly inconvenienced by their two babies. The healthier, stronger and more robust of the two relaxes pleasantly on the mother's back, while the one who needs a little care always gets his belly squashed on one shoulder or the other.

845 776 778 1235 The genie of twins lives in a kind of hourglass made of two plates of braided grass; a bit of iron or wood onto which a piece of the umbilical cord has been rolled is hung from the centers. This fetish is called a sinsin and costs the father between 1 ba and 1 ba 200 cowrie shells (between 800 and 1200 cowrie shells, or 20 to 25 sous), not including, of course, the hens and kola nuts given to the sinsin tigi (1), more commonly called sinsin d'la tigi (2). To make this

1. Sinsin, the fetish bearing this name; tigi, "master," "owner."

2. Sinsin, the fetish; d'la, "maker"; tigi, "master," "He who manufactures the sinsin."

/98/ horror, which is hung in the entrance hut within an inverted gourd (1), one must own a father sinsin fetish and know the rites and

1. This gourd protects the sinsin from the teeth of rodents.

formulas.

A sacrifice to the sinsin is performed every year by the head of the family, who is himself its priest; the sacrifice continues to be made even in case of the death of the twins, because it is the

845
778 peculiarity of this fetish that it continues to live in its hourglass as
778 long as a particle of this object remains.

516
285
778

Young Bambara holding the sinsin, the fetish of twins

845 This fetish protects the mother of the twins, and unites the latter
778 in such close affection that one never receives a gift without sharing
431 it with the other. I would even go so far as to say that it is in good taste never to offer anything to one without offering as much to the other, and when they are given something, the first to be favored is the last born, who is considered by everyone as the older.

845 778 431 If one of the twins dies early in life, as usually happens, the survivor receives a statuette which he keeps all his life with jealous care and to which he gives the name of the deceased. He dresses it to the best of his ability, often covers it with glass trinkets, such as bangles, beads, bits of amber, rings, etc., and well-bred people never give him a gift without adding at least 5 cowrie shells for the statuette.

845 778 825 The sinsin also grants twins a curious privilege. A scorpion not only cannot bite them, it is even at their service, and on their order will bite a fellow who has displeased them.

845 778

A twins' doll.

845 551 It is easy to recognize twins (flani in Bambara) as they have special names, the commonest being Sinna, Maféné, Gno, and Ouassa. /99/

10. The Genie Protector of Villages

776 621 The genie protector of a village lives on a knoll or a rock; almost always, if not invariably, its home is a baobab or false cedar near the walls, in a little grove intersected by neat paths, well kept and often raked.

Such a spirit is the exclusive property of one family, and even bears its name, or diamou. Its sacrificer, called gnéna-n-sonnaba, also bears the name of dougoutigi (1); he is, in fact, the real head of

1. Gnena, "fetish," "genie"; sonnaba, "great sacrificer"; dougou, "village"; tigi, "head," "master."

Typical Bambara headman.

the village. Although at present the civil and religious authorities are separate in many places, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or religious priest, always holds precedence, and self-respecting people call him dougoutigi (head of the village), giving the title of sotigi (2) to the

2. So, "hut," "house"; tigi, "head."

one who has only civil authority. Here we have further evidence that the organization of the Bambara nation was, at its origin purely religious. The separation of the two authorities in certain hamlets can easily be understood.

Under the Bambara dynasty the kingdom of Ségou was divided into provinces, cantons, and villages. The king, Fama or Massa

631 ("great sorcerer who has communication with the invisible beings"), lived at Ségou with his court. At the head of each of his provinces he had a minister responsible for levying the tax (/this man was/ his tool, often one of his children, to whom -- doubtless for this reason -- was given the title of Fama, petty king. The minister did his work through the intermediary of the heads of cantons, or kafotigi, under who, with respect to civil matters, were all the heads of villages, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi. /100/

The levying of the tax often gave rise to disputes between the kafotigi and the dougoutigi, and the latter would resign from his functions or be relieved of them. After that he lost all civil powers but none of his religious or priestly authority, and since the religious sphere had precedence over the civil, he kept his title of dougoutigi in his role as gnéna-n-sonnaba. The one who replaced him /in the civil sphere/ was never anything but an upstart and worthy only of the name sotigi ("head of houses"), although his responsibility became hereditary.

798 Under Moslem domination the worship of the gnéna, or djiné,
793 was forbidden and punished by very severe penalties (slavery or death).
621 It can thus be believed that it was to the advantage of the gnena-n-sonnaba to keep their position quiet, to refuse the title of dougoutigi, and even to forbid their people to bestow it on them. In Bani country and among the Bambara of Sikasso and Koutiala, where Moslem domination was never solidly established, there was no cause for similar fears, and it is understandable that the custom of calling the religious head dougoutigi and the civil head sotigi has been retained.

621 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, is helped in his duties
793 by a siéré (aide, deputy); the heads of quarters (sotigi) and the heads of families (gouatigi) make up his council. Nothing important is done in the village without consulting its head, who calls all his elders together and decides nothing without them. All of them are also present at any sacrifice if it is offered by a family, and it is not unusual to see them going single file, evening or morning, to the sacred grove of the fetish. On the morning of a marriage, they always go there.

796 A great sacrifice to the spirit protector of the village, the
825 dasiri, is made every year. The spirit always has a mount such as
782 a snake, a rat, a lizard, a donkey, etc.; almost everywhere the mount is a terrible billy goat that roams through the village, enters everywhere, eats everything, and breaks everything without paying attention to the switch. For at least three days at the time of the sacrifice, the village makes merry; men, women, and children dance, stuff themselves with food, and drink and get drunk.

796 Just as everyone takes part in the feasting and drinking, so all
782 participate in the sacrifice, even the women, who at least go to the edge of the sacred grove, though they do not enter. And /101/ there is an abundance of everything: dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, d'lo, or millet beer, and finally meats. At least a goat, and sometimes a bull, is killed for the whole village, and the heads of families offer goats and hens, depending their wealth.

782 In addition to the sacrifices offered once a year and those offered
778 by a family when one of the children marries, the fetish receives
776 homage and tribute from just about everyone. Sterile women and those who habitually miscarry offer it many hens and fawn upon the animal that is its mount. If one gives birth to a baby, one consecrates it to the fetish, calling it dji-ri-ba ("great tree"), gnéna ma ké (gnéna, "genie"; ma, "man"; ké, "male"), or gnéna ma (gnéna, "genie"; ma, "man"). They even like to add the name of the village where the bountiful dasiri is found: Kolotomo gnéna ma (1). /102/

1. Kolotomo, the name of a village about 30 kilometers from Ségou; gnena, "genie"; ma, "man."

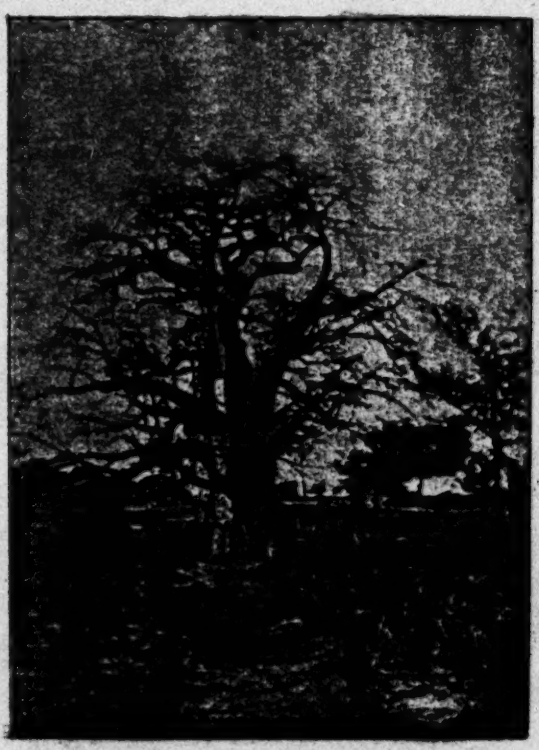
(man or daughter of the dasiri genie of Kolotomo). Actually, the name gnénama is given only to girls; for boys the word ké ("male") is added: gnénama-ké.

776 It is known through the mediation of sorcerers that a dasiri
778 sometimes leaves its sacred grove and its tree. This event is unusual;
824 the tree may fall from old age, but the sacrifices will be continued

776
778 on the stump, the open hole, or on the sprout that comes out of the
824 ground, grows, and replaces the tree.

776 Every dasiri has a sacred mount which bears its name and, as
778 I have already said, it seems to prefer a billy goat above all. The
825 latter dies of old age, that is, unless the good of the community dictates otherwise; I saw one perish in the prime of life because of

[778
824]



A dasiri fetish tree (of Songobougou).

its scandalous behavior; he was inordinately fond of the ewes of the village, which he mistook for goats, and this behavior was far too shameless for a sacred being.

776 The fetish protects the village by causing the evil spells and
778 sorcery cast on it to misfire. It defends the village against wicked
621 people and against its enemies, and thanks to it the inhabitants can
793 peacefully devote themselves to their work in the fields. While averting plagues and diseases which decimate the population, it gives strength, health, and vigor to all, and finally it populates the village by making the women fertile. Above all, it is the source of unity among families for it brings them all together under the authority of a single head; the friends of the head of the family whose name, or diamou, it bears, are its friends, and his enemies are also its own. To fail the priest, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, is to fail the fetish, so close and intimate is the union between the two.

11. The Koté, or Koré, Genie

794 Since it is the fundamental basis of power and authority, the
776 worship of the dasiri can, with some justice, be regarded as the first
778 and oldest of all Bambara religious practices. That of the koté, or koré, likewise seems to me quite respectable from this standpoint and just as old. As a matter of fact, this spirit, like the dasiri, lives in
[824] a little grove near the village, and the three trees it likes to inhabit are the baobab, the false cedar, and the nettle tree.

794 The worship of the koré is especially popular in Bani country.
Today not all the villages have the fetish, but all have at /103/ least a few initiates belonging to this semioccult sect. The sect includes women among its members; it is divided into eight groups, each ruled by its oldest member, who in turn is under the authority of the koretigi, the supreme head of the association.

794 At the time of the annual sacrifices, and especially at the
778 sacrifices made every seven years on the days of admission (for it is necessary to be a koré dé (1) in order to participate in the secret part

1. Koré, the fetish bearing this name; dé, "son."

of the mysteries carried out in the sacred grove), these groups present the most ludicrous gathering in the circle of Ségou. The kara maou carry a red and white perforated board, about two meters long called the kara; the souroukou wear a mask resembling a hyena (souroukou) and walk leaning on two sticks; and the korodouga get themselves up in a costume impossible to describe. The ta tougoula (2) dance,

2. Ta, "fire"; tougou, "to light."

holding a burning torch in each hand; the n'goni sama (3) cover them-

3. N'goni, "thorns"; sama, "to draw to oneself"; they are also called wara, "wild," "fearless," "courageous."

selves with thorns or lacerate themselves on the chest and under the armpits until they bleed; and the bisatjila (4) whip themselves with

4. Bisa, or bousa, "stick," "switch"; tji, "hit," "break."

long, flexible switches. There are also the djara (lions), who wear a mask just like that of the hyena (souroukou) only larger, and the soula (monkeys), who parade with hideous, grimacing masks and wear a tail in back made of braided grass.

The koré sect is semioccult, for while only initiates are allowed at the sacrifices and within the sacred grove, the dances are held in the village, and all, men, women, and children, attend. The wives of the korodouga belong to the confraternity by right, but they do not know the password djanténa ("man of the djanté"), and they are forbidden to enter the sacred grove. Their great privilege is that they are permitted to wear their husbands' uniform, which is a long necklace of red beans, to sit with the men around the gourds of beer, and finally to dance the dirty and disgusting dance of the korodouga without having to be ashamed.

794 The koré fetish watches over the crops and gives its initiates the
796 only pleasures that they know and desire -- to drink, to eat, and to enjoy /104/ a woman -- and, as will later be demonstrated, all this comes out in their dances and orgies. In spite of its great power, the poor genie cannot handle its many concerns; the Bambara, who judge everything according to themselves to such an extent that they inject their own organization into the world of invisible beings, have therefore given it eight groups of spirits who carry out its orders and make up its court. Some watch over the insignia and preserve the names of the initiates, and others render powerless anyone who would harm the crops. Just like a distinguished, powerful, and rich man here, the koré has its storyteller /griots/ or heralds, the korodouga, who sing its praises, transmit to it the petitions and prayers of the initiates, and dance its dances. The eight groups of the sect are simply the representation of this court, the concrete expression of the Negroes' concept of it.

794 The initiation into, or affiliation with, the koré sect takes place only every seven years. It is long and painful; for fifteen days the young initiates live in the sacred grove and cannot go into the village. Since they need some training for future dances, the old men come to torment them every noon in the worst heat, and each initiate, according to the group to which he belongs, suffers for some moments the torment of fire, thorns, or the rod.

[126] The rigor of the admission in no way alienates the Bambara, and in Bani it is a disgrace to refuse the hen for the sacrifice and the /payment of/ 120 cowrie shells, and not to join. It is true that everything is repaid, for the sect has many festivals and d'lo, or millet beer, is never lacking.

In addition to the annual sacrifice, a sacrifice is made to the genie every time an initiate dies. There is another sacrifice on the anniversary of his death, and during the dry season the koré dé go from one festival to another, spending their nights in [illegible]meless drinking bouts and orgies. /105/

Chapter 6

Worship, Celebrations, Saraka, Sacrifices, and Dances in Honor of the Gnéna

1. The First Two Groups of Gnéna

781 The fundamental bases of all Bambara devotions are first, and
776 above all, fear and secondly, the desire to have everything without effort or work. The Bambara respect a strong, powerful being because it can punish and reward, and since their fetishes are not equal in power, they take care not to honor all equally.

776 The genii of the first two groups have no priest or official
782 minister, and public, solemn sacrifices are offered them very rarely.
852 In the dry season, however, some festivals are held in their honor. The chief participants are children, who on these days stuff themselves with /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, and with sorghum cakes. When they are full they take the leftovers outside the village to a place where paths cross, and many hens, dogs, and other
[735] animals come for the booty. The poor and unfortunate also come, for they, too, may take their share; every saraka (1) belongs to them.

1. Tax, tribute, alms.

776 Little girls and boys take part in these festivals, but there is a
852 special one for unexcised girls, and those who are soon to be excised and are getting ready for this great event in Bambara life bear /106/ all the expenses. It is the celebration of soli basi k'li (1), of which I will speak at greater length in my chapter on circumcision.

1. Soli, "young girls who will soon be excised"; basi, a kind of couscous with very small grains which distantly resembles semolina; k'li, "obtained by singing and clapping hands."

000 I will speak at greater length in my chapter on circumcision.

776 Although the individual worship of the lesser genii by one per-
782 son or family is seldom public -- except sometimes temporarily, it nonetheless involves an enormous waste of /millet/ flour, kola nuts, cotton, cowrie shells, etc. Nevertheless, there are very few sacrifices in these offerings; most frequently, if not always, they are saraka, or alms, and a kind of tax or tribute since they are obligatory.

782 They are, in fact, obligatory alms, paid by an individual, a
791 family, or a whole quarter of a village, upon the command of a sorcerer. Some sorcerers who have renown or want to acquire it manage to prescribe these taxes for an entire village and, sometimes, even for a whole region. The occurence is not unusual; I have seen it happen every year. A shrewd operator from Bélé Koun in the circle of Sikasso, crosses the Bani in every dry season, and there is not a village in the circle of Ségou but feels called upon to hand hens and cowrie shells over to him and, in addition, afterwards to take a large contribution to one of the nearby crossroads. In spite of his youth -- he is twenty-five or thirty at most -- he is said to learn everything
[787] by searching hens' entrails and crushing their viscera between his fingers. He makes profit by predicting terrible calamities everywhere. All his knowledge is summed up in the following words: "The genii are displeased, offer a saraka and offer it quickly, for if you do not, all children under three years old will die... goats, cows, horses, and sheep will die... springs will dry up... the karité butter will fail..., etc." In one place the words are those of a hyena, in another, those of a cow, and farther away it is a wild pig that speaks. And the dégé (/millet/ flour mixed with water) is spread and the blood of hens flows in streams. In short, the people are always expected to give to the fetishes and the sorcerers, and to give everything. Some occasionally balk and do not want to obey. The orders of the sorcerer become urgent, his prophesies more terrible than ever; at the end of his patience, he may spit out insults and /107/ curses, and then everyone comes to offer the saraka. Even Moslems let themselves be taken in.

782 In Bambara eyes, the saraka never has the character of a sacrifice. As I explained at length in speaking of the worship of God, it is always

782 alms, an obligatory gift, and consequently a tribute or tax paid to the genii in order to consecrate to them an object, an animal, a person for the purpose of protecting oneself, of avoiding the risk of any disfavor or of receiving a blessing. That is its nature whether it is individual or village-wide, regardless of whether it does or does not involve bloodshed. The Bambara call this kind of offering saraka bo, saraka di (1).

1. Bo, "go out"; di, "give."

782 754 Saraka are also offered to consecrate an object, an animal, or a person to the genii for the purpose of harming a neighbor. There is always a little magic involved in these offerings, and it is not unusual, at a short distance from the corner of land fromed by paths that join or cross, to find on the path a wad of hair, a bit of a horn, a box full of ashes, etc.

The Bambara performs this magic to help the fulfillment of his saraka, his entreaty; he is convinced that if his enemy touches the magic object thus thrown out at random, his vengeance will be more certain, prompt, and drastic. There is more to this symbolic magic: how many times have I seen, at these corners of land where the gnâma (2) stay and the saraka are held, a chicken heart fastened to the

2. Fluids, conscious forces which cause death and sickness. See my chapter on the gnâma.

ground by a bamboo spike! Often someone will crucify a little animal, usually a lizard, on the ground, and a nail will be driven into the part where he wants his enemy to be stricken. For this kind of saraka the Bambara have a standard term, saraka da ma kan (3), ("to make a

3. Saraka, "obligatory alms," "tribute," "tax"; da, "to place," "to put"; ma-kan, "on a man."

saraka against someone").

782 857 There are many kinds of saraka, and they are offered for just about all purposes. Besides those given by order of sorcerers, there are some established by custom itself, and uncircumcised children are required to carry them out. They often hunt turtles, /108/ palm rats, guinea fowl, and partridges, so they plant a strong dry branch either outside the village or even inside it, and on its branches hang the heads of captured animals and the shells of eggs they have sucked. This is their way of thanking the genii, of ensuring other successful hunts, and of protecting themselves from the gnâma of their many victims.

782 The Bambara also give the name of saraka to some practices that are purely and simply superstitious and do not, strictly speaking, have the character of religious worship. In these instances the word saraka must be given a broader meaning than that which I have attributed to it. The old shoes, caps, fruit rinds, rags, etc., hung here and there on branches of trees are not so much a rendering of homage by the Black to a genie, to an external agent, as they are a tribute paid their own inner, personal, and unreasoned fear. In this respect they are like some Europeans, foster brothers of these idiots, who believe in the salt cellar, crossed knives, thirteen at the table, Friday, etc., who turn over the salad bowl before undertaking a serious matter, or slide a four-leaf clover into their vest pockets. And why? It brings good luck, causes success. And how? They cannot tell you, for with them it is not reasoned -- nor is it with the Bambara.

2. Gnéna of the Third Group; The Eight /sic/ Categories of Powerful Gnéna

776 782 796 The third group of genii have their priests and ministers; saraka are not enough for them, and they receive sacrifices. The public sacrifices are annual, and the whole population -- men, women, and children -- participate. Dégé (/millet/ flour mixed with water), white hens, and white kola nuts are the usual material of the sacrifice, and the formula recited can always be reduced to the following: "Give us water; cause peace to reign among us, in the

776 village and in our families; grant us plenty and wealth, give us many
782 wives, healthy and vigorous children, and a long and hearty old age."
796 If the occasion is semipublic /109/ or public, a general sacrifice is always offered in the name of the family, the quarter, or the village, and then individual sacrifices follow. On the days when they are held, there are always dances and drinking bouts, for the favors of a fetish cannot be obtained except by leaping to the sound of drums and by getting drunk.

At the risk of repeating myself, I cannot resist giving the fascinating side of the Negroes' attachment to their fetishism and describing the festivals and celebrations in honor of the principal fetishes -- in order that the reader may gain a greater understanding and feeling for their worship.

The N'tomo, the Special Children's Fetish

852 The harvest is over, and the yield of the field cultivated by the
796 children during the winter, together with the small donations received from the people of the village, allows the n'tomigi (head of the confraternity) and his siéré (aide, deputy) to furnish its initiates and the old men -- the latter are never forgotten -- with a plentiful feast of kola nuts, millet beer, or d'lo, and /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, or dégé. The day of the celebration is set by the head of the village and by the elders, and everyone prepares for it two weeks in advance. In the blon, or entrance huts, and in the
852 shade of trees, one sees nothing but old men cutting and sewing dioki,
796 bougi, boge, and yaba (1), which will be worn for the first time on
291

1. Dioki, a large blouse. Bougi, near Ségou, a kind of pants without legs; in Bani country, a strip of cloth three to four fingers wide which goes around the waist, passes between the thighs, and drops in back, forming flaps over the heavy part of the thighs.

852
796
291

The end of this strip is tucked up.
Bogo, garment worn by girls until their marriage, consisting of a strip of cloth tied at the waist and falling in back to make a train.
Yaba, boys' jacket, especially common in Bani country.

that day. A swarm of children patch the yellow or white blouses that will be worn during the dance, and grease and re-grease the mask of the n'tomo. They pay special attention to the horns, which are often hidden under little thongs of red leather decorated from end to end with well-polished cowrie shells as white as snow.

852
796
782

But now we come to the longed-for day! All the little rebels go single file to the fetish tree, and each carries the hen, its feet tied, which he intends for the sacrifice. They /110/ all take off their blouses -- the little undergarment allows freer movement and is less hampering -- and, after some whispering they finally end up squatting, fixing their big, black eyes on the leader, the n'tomotigi, who begins the sacrifice with the assistance of his aide, the siéré.

This little fellow is really funny, as with the solemnity of an old man he pours the dégé, sprinkles the blood of the hens, and noisily spits the remains of a piece of chewed kola nut onto the sacred tree, the dwelling of his genie. I do not doubt that he is convinced, and thoroughly convinced, that he is not addressing a tree trunk that has no consciousness; he believes that he is in the presence of who watches him, waits for him, and asks only to grant his wishes. Since he is addressing a powerful being, fear and emotion at first make him tremble; but gradually his voice grows firmer, and very clearly he pronounces his formula: "N'tomo ye, see this hen, a beautiful hen, isn't it? It is fat! n'tomo, on behalf of all of us I offer you this hen as a sacrifice. Favor us, defend us against the fury of the genii of the bush and against the malicious. Make us strong and vigorous, give us plenty to eat and drink, drive sickness from us. Give us water and a good harvest, n'tomo, and give wealth to our families."

852 After this special sacrifice come the individual sacrifices, and
791 the very young boys who are henceforth to belong to the n'tomo
782 prostrate themselves before the fetish tree and take an oath to reveal nothing to the uninitiated, and especially not to little girls. This oath is not at all trivial: "If you talk, if you reveal your oath, " says the leader showing each one some black powder, "you will die." And they all reply without trembling: "May I die!"

852 When the rite of admission is over, each initiate plucks his hen
796 and draws it, and while the victims simmer over the fire in an earthen conari, the youngsters beat drums and abandon themselves to the dance, and so into a frenzy which continues under the eye of the fetish, in the shade of its preferred tree until the time of the feast. Each child in turn dances the dance of the fetish, which consists of leaps and capers and a graceful twirling of a flexible switch. To dance he dons
[292] the white or yellow blouse of the fetish (n'tomo ka dloki, "the blouse of the n'tomo"), which is white (dje) or black, yellow (fign, as I said in the preceding chapter) /sic/ /111/, and takes the horned mask, the n'tomo kongolo ("head of the n'tomo") by means of which he externalizes in a concrete form his concept of the genie.

Victims abound, and the feast is plentiful. There is enough for everybody, and there is not one on that day who does not lick his fingers and say with a smile: "Ne ne fara de! (1), How full I am!"

1. Né, "me, " "I"; fara, "am full"; dé, "surely."

The little boys' families contribute much, for Bambara mothers and little sisters have good hearts. Thanks to them, every initiate can offer from 10 to 20 liters of dégé, the same amount of d'lo; and his gourd of to (gruel) holds enough to tire six to eight big eaters. In addition to the dessert, which is kola nut, each boy receives a new garment for himself and a light bogo and sometimes a tafé (2) for

[291] 2. Tafé, rectangular piece of cloth which the women wear around their hips.

85 his "sister of the heart." In fact, on the day of his admission to the
796 n'tomo every small Bambara chooses a n'golo mouso to whom he gives a small gift each year. The dreadful part of this custom is that in Bambara country the n'golo mouso is less prudish than the girl friend or sweetheart of a little French boy and is often a little maid-of-all-work who lends herself without qualms to unhealthy and indecent play.

After the feast, which takes about three hours, the n'tomo déou (sons of the n'tomo) leave the place of sacrifice and return to the village in Indian file, preceded by drums. D'lo, or millet beer, awaits them, but before touching the divine liqueur they must perform a bloody rite. It is hideous, and yet, it is the high point and chief attraction of the celebration!

On the public square, in front of drums that give the measure
852 and beat the rhythm, the young n'tomo déou flagellate themselves,
796 usually until they bleed. The old men run up, dragging their mats
785 after them; the women, squatting on their tiny stools, clap their hands and sing; and mothers wrap the loins of their children in long white scarves to protect their lower abdomens from misdirected blows. The n'tomigi and his siéré -- honor to whom honor is due -- go into the arena, and while the little leader holds his switch above his head with both hands, /112/ the siéré beats him hard with his own switch on the back chest, calves, soles of his feet, and everywhere. When he is tired of beating or his switch breaks, he stops and the leader in his turn gives a round to his aide. In this way, two by two, according to age and size, the children flagellate (1) each other. The flick, flack

1. In Bani country each child flagellates himself. Although that is not the usual custom, it may be encountered in many villages.

of whip lashes, which cause blood to spurt, bruise the flesh, and always leave a furrow as wide as a thumb, may often be heard for hours. Little boys of six or seven years often stop at the second blow to scratch their backs and open their mouths to cry, but I have seen some stay unmoved just like their elders of ten to twelve years, without a

852 tear, a complaint, or a cry of pain, and they are so imperious that
796 one might think they were of bronze.
785

The N'golo, the Special Fetish of the Circumcised

852 The children of this fetish, whose function I explained in the
794 preceding chapter, grant themselves many days of celebration in its honor in the course of the year. The main festival, however, is annual and in addition to the dégé, a hen, and two kola nuts offered by each initiate, a goat is sacrificed on behalf of all.

Since it is from this fetish that the fla-n-to organization derives its existence, its members, the to-n-déou, offer drink and food to the whole village for two or three days. The women, too, contribute their share to this horrible drinking bout, and their queen (fama, massa) -- humbling herself before the to-n-tigi, head of the fla-n-to and priest of the n'golo, who thoughtlessly wastes the produce of the field worked by his subjects in the winter -- distributes many kola nuts and adds still more to the d'lo, which already flows in streams.

The beer is drunk out of doors on the public square, and everyone -- men, women, and children -- is there, shouting, dancing, and getting drunk. Seated under a goua, a shed covered with coarse
[346] mats, /113/ and surrounded by his acolytes (the siéré, the djéli, and the djalatiké), the to-n-tigi sits in the place of honor, and it is he who directs the drinking and the dances. He is really king on these days, and all obey him at the slightest sign, gesture, or word. When he gets up to romp or take a turn before the drums, he is honored; all the initiates call "you you," shake their caps (ban fla), and compete as to who will take his gun, spear, stick, or ax and beat the time for the dance. But he wants to speak; he must speak; he feels the need to issue an order, to give thanks, or to impose a light fine on his band; and his spokesman runs to his side. He repeats the speech of his chief word for word and sentence by sentence, and sometimes even adds a comment of his own, for some Bambara have a sharp wit and very easily find a saying to bring a laugh.

852 794 Every time one of the three principal members of the staff, wants to dance, respects are paid to them or to their leader, and all day and all night nothing is heard but frightful "you you" and atrocious cries. There is a protocol for everyone to follow, and before each to-n-dé begins to prance in front of the drums, he goes and bows to his leader to show his devotion and respect for him. He holds himself like a spring, brandishes the gun, ax, or stick that he will use in the dance, and in one jump strikes his feet together under the nose of the one to whom he is paying his respects. The women are quieter and show their respect by a genuflection before the master.

In addition to his staff the master of a n'golo, the to-n-tigi, has pages, a standard bearer, trumpeters, and soldiers, and to vary the program he goes here and there with his frenzied band to greet an elder and give him a serenade. In some villages custom decrees that the youths put on the best they have in the way of clothing; in others, on the contrary, they must get themselves up in horrible, dirty rags so that, on seeing them thus clad, one asks where they could have dug up all these horrors. They must amuse themselves and be [520] amused, laugh and cause laughter, and this last aim is always accomplished as they have such priceless mimics. /114/

The Mouso ka djiri, the Women's Special

776 796 831 It is impossible to know all the genii responsible for watching over women, for they are legion. Every month, at the new moon, the women organize a dance in their honor, and every year they make a public, solemn sacrifice to them. The most widespread is the mouso ka djiri, and its worship flourishes especially in Bani country.

When its festival comes, all the excised women offer it a little /millet/ flour mixed with water, a hen, and two kola nuts, and the head of the village, or, in his absence, an elder, goes and reddens the bark of the fetish tree (1). There is no need for me to go into

[782]

1. Some people assert that they have seen women sacrificing. I have seen women perform saraka involving bloodshed, but never a sacrifice.

776 this sacrifice at length, for in the preceding chapter I stated the
796 function of the fetish; it may be imagined that the ladies and maidens
831 ask for whatever makes a woman strong and beautiful. Moreover, the indecent dances to which they abandon themselves under the sacred tree sufficiently reveal their inner thoughts. They have only one -- to show their breasts to the fetish and scratch their navels on its bark; in some villages custom demands this, and it is required of all. Young girls do it to develop their breasts, married women to become fertile, and all of them to be protected from the unpleasant accidents peculiar to their sex.

796 There is no festival without a feast and none without drinking, and the women offer the whole village sorghum gruel and beer for a drinking bout. They also offer kola nuts to all the elders and heads of families, and they know better than to withhold this treat from fathers, husbands, grown sons, older brothers, and those they love.

The Sinsin, the Special Twin's Fetish

782 The sacrifice to a sinsin is made on the umbilical cord which
845 is hung in the center of plates of woven grass that constitute the
778 fetish. Each plate belongs to one of the twins and even bears his
852 name. The sacrifices in honor of this fetish are always double; for each child separately, the family offers /millet/ flour /115/ mixed with water, millet beer, a kola nut, and a hen.

845 This is strictly a family fetish; the father of the family is its
778 priest, and only the children and their parents are present at the
852 sacrifices. Everything is done in a quiet and happy intimacy, and although there may be a few drunkards here and there, there is never an orgy. Sacrifices to a sinsin are made very frequently to bring its blessing to the mother and children; they are also performed on all occasions of the slightest importance in the lives of the twins: when their hair is cut eight days after birth, at the tattooing festival, at circumcision, at marriage, etc. Once a year a more formal sacrifice is made; the women cook d'lo, the millet beer, and the

845
778 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are
852 invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

776 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that
624 its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

Election of the priest

776 The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted,
624 and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still
793 lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and
[802] fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door," "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses," "shades."

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

621 793 555 The palavers and deliberations are long, but the choice is a happy one; the old man chosen as gnéna-n-sonnaba always has the slyness and guile characteristic of the Bambara type. Patient and likeable, he will know how to be just and impartial in disputes, diplomatic and sufficiently master of himself to say only what he intends to. He will know how to acquire the reputation of an upright man who does not know theft or falsehood.

621 793 Elected for life to hold both civil and religious power, he is truly the head of the village, the dougoutigi. His position is hereditary; it passes from brother to brother and, when there are none, goes by right to his oldest son. The one who is to succeed him becomes his aide (siéré), and the heads of families (gouatigi-ou) compose his council; they are always summoned when a question is to be handled or a decision made.

The Choice of the dasiri fetish and its sacred mount

776 778 787 The new village has a head, his aide, and its council; it is organized. Now they must find out the whereabouts of the spring, rock, or tree where lives the protecting spirit, the dougou dasiri (1),

1. Dougou dasiri: /dougou/, "village"; da, "mouth," "entrance"; siri, "bind."

who fastens the entrance to the village and watches over it. For this knowledge the people appeal to a sorcerer; he has intimate contact with the spirits, knows their ways and customs, and understands their language.

There are many sorcerers, and they do not all work in the same way. One discovers his oracles in the entrails of a hen, a second traces cabalistic signs on ashes, a third endlessly moves little stones, bones, and cowrie shells, counting them again and again. To locate the dasiri, people have recourse to the fléliké-la (2) diviner, who

2. Fléliké, "to look attentively, curiously."

776 works with a gourd three quarters full of water.
778 When he has received his honorarium of 40 cowrie shells, which
781 he takes in both hands, he places beside him in the dust his little /117/ gift, consisting of two kola nuts, a few hens, or better, a small billy goat. He asks about the place chosen for the new village and has it described to him down to the smallest detail. Then he takes down a dirty n'go (1) on which he places a gourd which he tips slowly right

1. A ring made of braided roots bound with cotton thread, which is covered with a thick layer of blood.

and left, forward and backward, to give it a firm position on its stand. Having done this, he sums up for the spirits the conversation which he has had, and then, with eyes afire and holding his breath, he gives the gourd three flicks with the middle finger of his right hand. They say that a soft murmur, a murmur which is none other than the voices of the genii, is noticed by all present. They hear without understanding, but the sorcerer knows these voices and when he rises it is with a tone of authority that he names the dasiri and the animal which will be its mount.

In the province of Ségou the dasiri is a tree; the tamarind, the false cedar, and the baobab are the preferred trees. The sacred mount, also called dasiri, is a snake, an iguana, a rat, a donkey, etc., but most frequently it is a billy goat.

778 Enthronement of the gnéna-n-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri and
621 dougoutigi, head of the village

Our Blacks establish the new village and build their huts. Near the fetish tree each family sets up its mortars for grinding sorghum, places its hearths, and installs its kitchens. Bows, guns, and farming implements are hung on the branches of the dasiri, and while the work of settling continues, meals are eaten and dances held in its shade, and in the evening when the moon is shining it is near the tree that they finally stretch out to sleep.

793 782 62 778 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, assumes office from the first day and offers a sacrifice in the name of his people. On the trunk of the tree, about a meter from the ground, he pours d'lo, or millet beer, and dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with water, and causes a flow of blood from hens, roosters, goats, and sometimes from a young bull. After this general sacrifice, individual ones follow, for, in order to /118/ place himself under the protection of the genie, each family head in order of seniority offers it a little dégé and a little blood, through the intermediary of his leader, the priest. And on the trunk of the tree there is nothing but great blood stains with feathers, hairs, and shreds of skin stuck in their midst with the remains of chewed kola nuts. Then come the dances, and men, women, and children go into a frenzy at the sound of drums; and the tumult is indescribable.

Sacrifices offered to the dasiri

778 782 796 A path a meter wide leads from the village to the fetish tree which is always located in the middle of a small grove if possible. Heads of families sacrifice to it several times a year -- on the morning after the konio, or first night of marriage, for example, but the festival in which the whole village takes part is annual. The ceremony has greater importance every second year, and every seventh year it degenerates into an orgy.

During the sacrifice the women stay at the edge of the sacred grove, and only the men and boys go inside and surround the fetish. After an offering of dégé and a little d'lo, the throat of a sheep or goat is cut in the name of the whole village, and the head of each family, comes with hens, sheep, goats, etc., according to the family's means and the number of members; the meat piles up. The hens are plucked on the spot, the large pieces are cut up, and the women carry it all back to the village. Each family head is given a piece as big as a fist from the first sacrifice offered in the name of all, and this, too, is [252] taken back to the village; the rest is roasted and then grilled on the spot and eaten by the men, without salt, pepper, or any kind of seasoning. The dégé and d'lo of the main sacrifice are drunk under

778 the fetish tree, the former by the children who smear themselves
782 and whiten their entire faces, and the latter by the men and circum-
796 cised youths (1).

1. By the main sacrifice I mean the sacrifice made in the name of the whole village.

After the noon meal men, women, and children go to the public square to drink beer, or d'lo, and to dance. /119/ The signal for the celebration is given by the gnéna-n-sonnaba, who makes a little speech inviting his children (né ka démisenou, "my children," "my subjects") to have fun and to drink but to avoid fights and quarrels, and then launches into a quadrille. While he dances, the crowd stands bareheaded, cries "you you" loudly, and competes as to who will shake his spear or ax to beat the measure. This annual festival goes on for three or four days, as long as the d'lo, or millet beer, lasts.

776 All circumcised men and excised women may, through the
782 intermediary of the gnéna-n-sonnaba, offer a sacrifice to the genie protector of the village. Anyone who thinks he has offended or displeased it offers one -- with or without bloodshed according to his means -- to obtain pardon, propitiate it, and gain its favor. Individuals sacrifice primarily to make requests; a di ("give it") are the first words they were able to lisp as infants. A sterile woman
[842] will offer it a kola nut, dégé, a rooster or a hen at every moment, always promising not to be miserly and to give more if she becomes a mother. She will be especially assiduous toward the dasiri animal, the mount of the genie of this name; she will coax it, stuff it with bran, and will often go far into the bush to pick it a stalk of grass or a leafy branch which are its delicacies.

776 Genii spirits can leave the spring, the rock, or the tree where
778 they have established their dwellings, and the dasiri is no exception to this rule. If it does so, the fetish tree loses its sanctity, becomes a common object, and can be destroyed. Similarly, all things in the sacred grove, both plant and animal, cease to be taboo and can be used for their customary purposes. The dasiri is not at all fickle.

776 It rarely leaves its tree; it likes its little grove and shady park, and
778 in many places it is satisfied with a stump that is all blackened, worm eaten, rotten, and falling to pieces.

The formula of the sacrifice

782 When one is present at a sacrifice to the dasiri and sees the
781 gnéna-n-sonnaba uncover his head, take off his large blouse, and crouch at the feet of the fetish, one expects something imposing and grand. Nothing of the sort occurs, and one is quite surprised to find so little gravity /120/ in such an important act. People enjoy themselves and chat; the priest, red with blood, tosses off witticisms and coarse jokes, and while feet and wings of the victims -- goats, sheep, and hens -- twitch in the agonies of death, nothing passes from one group to another but bursts of laughter that finally disappear far off at the edge of the grove where the women are.

782 The words in the sacrificial formula vary a little from one village to another, all depending on the volubility of the sacrificer. Nevertheless, it remains basically the same everywhere. After having greeted the fetish in his own name and the name of his subjects, he implores it to forgive them all the insults, offenses, and disrespect toward it, of which they have been guilty, voluntarily or involuntarily, during the entire year. He then calls it by a name related to the type of tree in which it is located -- e.g., ma ziraba ("great baobab man"), ma djala ba ("great false-cedar man"), -- and announces that he is going to sacrifice. While offering the dégé and d'lo, he implores it to protect them against the evils of the sons of the fetish siri, the souba (1), to preserve them from the souya maou (2), the

[754]

1. Sou, "night"; ba, "great." The souba are masters of the night who change themselves into hyenas or owls, dig up corpses, and eat human flesh.

2. Souyaké, "to prowl at night."

782 gné-foula (3), and from the wokolo, a little dwarf genie. He then

3. "Two eyes," i.e., people with second sight.

asks for strength and health for all, for children who will be healthy, strong, and vigorous, and for wives. "Preserve us," he adds in closing, "from wicked people, discord, quarrels, and fights, from the rage of women who easily fall under the power of 'satan,' and from sickness; finally, give us rain, without which a harvest is not possible." Then he cuts the throat of a goat or a white sheep, and while he reddens the bark of the sacred tree with blood, he repeats his pleas and requests, and he says them again a third time while offering the kola nut.

At individual sacrifices nothing in the formula is changed. However, if the person on whose behalf the sacrifice is offered wants a special blessing or favor, he tells the sacrificer about it, and the latter states the request then and there. /121/

When the head of a family cannot be present at a sacrifice, his substitute gives the reason for his absence. Two witnesses then come to testify that the reason given is the true one and that there is no ill will whatever on the part of the absentee.

Sometimes a great clamor arises during the sacrifice, and one would say that people were fighting under the sacred tree, or at least arguing.

782 Nothing of the sort is happening; the crowd is crying out against
781 the fetish and interceding for an unfortunate whose sacrifice has not been accepted. It is known that this has happened when the hen does not fall on its back or its side with its feet in the air. The kola nut gives the genie's answer much more definitely. The sacrificer cuts it in two, holds the two pieces together between thumb and fore-finger, and having touched the ground with them twice saying, "Tell us if you accept the sacrifice," he throws them at the foot of the sacred tree. If the two pieces fall with the pulp on top, no further doubt is possible; the sacrifice is accepted, and he repeats the same procedure again, saying, "Since you accept the sacrifice, tell us if

you accept it at my hands." If one of the pieces falls with the pulp on top and the other onto the pulp, there is an affirmative answer from the dasiri. The sacrificer bites the kola nut, cuts out with his teeth the piece that contains the seed, and, when he has chewed it a moment, spits the remains onto the bark of the fetish tree.

This procedure, wholly dependent on chance, is often long, for the pieces of kola nut do not always fall in the desired position at the first try. After three failures the crowd ceases to restrain itself and, with gestures and voice, each person intercedes for the unfortunate one. The cries do not stop until the kola nut gives the answer, "I accept and am no longer angry!"

The Semioccult Society of the Koré, or Koté

The Bambara are, above all, farmers, and cultivating a field has such great importance in their eyes that for them it alone really deserves the name of work. One who does not handle the pick may be active and skillful, but he is not a worker and one does not say of him: "A bi ajaké, he is working." But will the seed that /122/ they consign to the earth in the winter sprout, grow, become large, and ripen? However little one knows the Bambara, one can imagine and understand their fears, for they are surrounded by a band of malicious spirits ever ready to pounce on them. Therefore they heed protectors and helpers, and at planting time they offer something to all, even to the rain. The main fetish to which they appeal is the koté, or koré, which lives in a tree in the middle of a small grove.

In order to be present at the sacrifices to the koté, it is necessary to be initiated and to know the password. This initiation, may take place by day, but at least in Bani country, it usually takes place at nightfall when the setting sun takes on a bloody hue. The sons of the genie go in procession to the sacred grove. The korétigi, the priest, opens the march, preceded by musicians who beat the denouba (1) and the kingé (2). With him are the kâra ma ("man of

794
796
534

1. Drums over a meter long and peculiar to the koré.

2. A kind of triangle which is hung on the thumb of the left hand and is struck with a ring or an iron nail placed on the little finger.

[778] the kârâ"), one of whom carries the kârâ, the perforated board which is the emblem of the fetish and at the same time the altar on which sacrifice is made to deceased members. First come the souroukou (hyenas) who guard the sacred grove and during the sacrifices drive away prying, uninitiated people; they wear crude masks, roll their big heads right and left, and utter frightful "hou hous." The [522] korodouga (clowns), who rake the paths in the sacred grove as well as its environs to protect it from brush fires, run from one to another shouting obscenities. Furiously they shake their gourds, which have handles and are perforated and filled with small stones, and furiously they blow into pipes made of pumpkin stems. The leader of this [292] band is dressed up in a cloak made of reed stems, he also wears a reed headdress which is topped by a pyramid of large red beans called n'go blé and decorated with a plume; in his hands he holds the emblem of the group, a long pole on which are hung dirty bags, sorghum stems 10 to 20 centimeters long bound into bundles, pumpkin stems, /123/ skulls of rats, beaks of ducks and hawks, panther claws, etc.

794 796 292 522 Apart from the long string of red beans which all korodougo are required to wear which they twine around their necks several times or sling over the shoulder, crossing and recrossing it on the back and chest, each one dresses according to his own inspiration. The hats are made of bunches of feathers, wings of vultures and ducks, and even entire birds, and around them to decorate them further are red beans, rat skulls, birds beaks, claws, and small bones; all these objects fall on the neck and shoulders and knock together with a sinister sound. Next to men in full breeches are men in rags or men with close-fitting trousers made of innumerable pieces all in different

colors, one leg of which goes down to the ankle while the other does not even reach the knee. Some brandish wooden swords, and others ride astride on a bamboo, a reed, or a sorghum stalk, rearing and kicking, and there is not one who does not act the clown.

The bisatjila (flagellants) make their flexible whips whistle in the air; shortly thereafter these whips rain blows onto their backs; the ta tougoula (fire lighters, incendiaries) seem impatient to shower their bare backs with sparks. The djara (lions) or sogo (beasts, animals) with masks even larger than those of the souroukou (hyenas) growl around the n'goni sama (1), also called wara (fearless wild animals).

1. N'goni, "thorns"; sama, "to kill for oneself."

The soula run from one group to another, slip between legs, and never stay still; they are seen everywhere, sometimes standing, sometimes with hands on the ground on all fours, or again sitting down, breaking bundles of grass or bits of wood between their hands and throwing them with shrill cries at the heads of their companions. And at the end of the procession come the old men, weighed down by the years and no longer of an age for all this fancy dress. They drag or carry the victims intended for the sacrifices.

In the grove around the sacred tree, there is a deafening noise of drums, triangles, reed pipes, and many voices /124/ that shout all together without ever harmonizing. At a sign from the leader, the kâra bearer goes and stands before the fetish tree, and everything becomes calm and quiet. The youths who have been waiting for seven years to be initiated advance in a line, fall on their knees before the fetish and its emblem, and then prostrate themselves with foreheads in the dust. They remain in this position as long as the sacred hymn lasts. On rising, they say: "Djanté koré déou djanté (djanté children of the djanté koré), djanté ma (man of the djanté)," and each dances the dance of the group to which he belongs. These dances are indecent and always conclude with an obscene gesture.

The oldest sons belong to the groups of their fathers; as to the others, they choose the group they like best. Thenceforth they are

korédé ("sons of koré"), and in all the province of Ségou, wherever a sacrifice is offered to the fetish, they may go into the sacred grove without any fear and take part in the mysteries. They have the password -- "djanté ma, man of djanté," and will know how to answer when interrogated by the souroukou (group of the hyena).

After the initiation the korétigi (priest of koré) proceeds with sacrifices. Everything happens as at the dasiri: after the libations of /millet/ flour (dégé) and beer (d'lo), the trunk of the sacred tree is reddened with blood, and all around the blood are tufts of fur and feathers stuck to the bark by remainders of chewed kola nut. A hyena mask called koré koungolo ("head /tête/ of koré") is also reddened with blood, as is the kiri, the emblem of the genie which is used as an altar for deceased initiates. Part of the meat is taken to the village, and the rest is grilled on the spot and eaten without any seasoning whatever.

In the sacrifices, koré and those that form its court are asked to watch over the harvest so that it may be abundant, to watch over the flocks so that they may thrive, to provide the petitioners with their fill of food and drink all their lives, and to give them a vigorous old age, etc., and all this is requested for one sole purpose: "so that we may be able to enjoy a woman and devote ourselves to carnal pleasures."

After the repast the crowd abandons itself to the dance, and until morning there is an indescribable uproar and endless shouting. At daybreak they go to the public square, and as long as the beer (d'lo) lasts /125/ the orchestra makes bedlam in front of the drinkers who squat around full gourds, and the women sit on mats or tiny stools piled on top of each other, clap their hands, and answer the obscenities of the korodouga with further obscenities.

[535] The dance of the groups, in which all members, young and old, take part, consists of more or less comical contortions which they execute going around in a circle, one behind the other. The old men tire quickly and their throats soon get dry, so they are not slow to sit down and get drunk to please koré, and the young people then abandon themselves and dance to their hearts' content.

Two or three tatougoula, a flaming torch in each hand, open the dance. They scorch their backs, chests, and armpits, and

794 thousands of sparks rain onto their heads and bare bodies, and smoke
796 and sizzle on their skins before going out. The korodouga, armed with
785 leafy branches, chase the sparks. They devote themselves chiefly to their obscene songs; their minds on the perforated gourds which they shake furiously, and more than one dancer feels himself getting roasted. And when the torches are almost burned out the tatougoula squat before the big drum and for the last time shake the handful of
[522] burning straw that they have left. An obscene gesture provokes a stifled laugh here and there, a "hou hou" from the souroukou, a roar from the djara, a chuckle from the soula, and cries of encouragement from around the gourds: "O do, that's it!"

While the djara /lions/ or sogo /beasts/, /wearing/ huge masks roar around the groups of drinkers, the ng'oni sama or wara tear their chests and their armpits with brushes of thorns, and the soula, grimacing and weeping, throw the group of women into confusion and put the children to flight. As to the bisatjila, they circle like lions in a cage, uttering wild animal cries and trying to excite themselves. Suddenly, as if seized by fury, they brandish their long, flexible whips. These whirl for a moment above their heads, whistle in the air, and then slap the flesh. The men strike hard; each blow leaves its mark or furrow, and /126/ blood often flows. They pale and tremble in all their limbs under the pain, but in spite of everything they strike and strike, for the instrument of torture must be worn to shreds and fly to pieces. At every blow of the whip the korodouga band throw themselves onto the victim and massage and rub him, and the souroukou lose themselves in indecent behavior in front of the great drum.

794 In addition to the sacrifice offered every seven years, there are
796 annual sacrifices to the koré, to the shades of its priests, the korétigi,
788 and finally to the shades of its initiates, the korédé. There is always
764 a sacrifice at the death of an initiate; the groups dance the sacred dance, and for three nights there is the shouting and the indescribable bedlam in the koré tou ("grove of the koré") of which I have told.

794 If the deceased initiate was an old man, a graybeard, he has
764 completed his whole career and his fellow-members come in great numbers to pay him their respects. Before the corpse, which is laid out under the trees which shade the entrance of the village, they

carry out their indecencies, shout obscenities, drink, and get drunk. And for three consecutive nights after the burial the same scenes are repeated in front of the fetish tree.

The anniversary of the death of a koredé ("son of koré") who became a koretigi (priest of koré), a gnéna-n-sonnaba (priest of the dasiri) or a gouatigi (head of a group, of a family), is celebrated with pomp; the family always makes it a point of honor to cook d'lo (beer), and people come from all directions to take part in the orgy. /127/

Chapter 7

The Worship of Satan or Worship of the Gnâ, or Boli

1. What is Meant by Gnâ, or Boli

Ever since God created their race and put it into the world, the Bambara have respected, venerated, and sacrificed to the gnéna, or djiné, those beings who are intermediate between angels and men. When one of them forgets himself under the influence of a jug of beer so far as to open to you -- oh, very slightly! -- a recess of his soul, he delights in telling you this, but he is careful not to make such a statement when he speaks to you of the gnâ, or boli. For although the beginnings of boli worship fade into the dark of the ages, it nevertheless has its history. The origin of each boli is known, and an initiate, however little instructed in its rites, can tell you whether it comes from the north or south, east or west, and whether it is male or female; and every graybeard can recite its family tree for you.

There is a great difference between the gnéna and the gnâ; they are different in every way, and we have here two beliefs which, though parallel, are absolutely distinct. Any object, whatever it may be, can become the home of a gnena, but these spirits prefer a living being, a plant, a tree, or an animal, for example, and when one is tired of its dwelling it moves elsewhere. A gnâ always lives in an

176 inanimate object, and whether the form it takes is human or animal, whether it resembles an eggplant, a potato, or a napkin ring, that form remains a boli as long /128/ as there is a piece left that is visible to the naked eye, and the boli never leaves it. In the case of the boli, there is such a close union between the object and the spirit that this combination becomes one and the same individual; it is the union of soul and body in order to make up a person or individual.

176 182 In sacrifices to the gnéna, the reverence of the Negro is not directed to the spring, the tree, the plant, etc., but to the genie that inhabits it. But in sacrifices to the gnâ, reverence is directed simultaneously to the spirit and to its object; one does not exist, is not thought of, without the other. Negroes have often given me to understand this, and one of my old friends, in order to explain his worship, expressed himself in these words: "When you honor your friend, is it his body or his soul that you honor? It is neither his body nor his soul; you honor both at the same time, the person himself as a whole, your friend; that is how it is with the boli." (1) /129/

176 182 539

1. In Bambara:

"Ne koko, n'i bé i terké bôgna, i be a fari bôgna wa ouala a dousou bôgna. I tè i terké bôgna wa? A bé tè boliou fé kor. An bi Sétané bôgna wa ouala a fen yéré bôgna, hèwa, anou dé bi boli bôgna.

"Faran fasili do be dasiri, djiri an'a djiné tjé. N'i b'a djiri son, i dé bé dasiri son, nka, i bé dasiri bôgna doron? Djiri te fen gouansan yé? a ti fourt gnâ.

"Tal, o do.

Translation:

"I myself say: if you honor your friend, do you honor his body or his soul? You honor your friend, don't you? It is the same with the boli. Do we honor satan or do we honor his object? Assuredly, it is the boli.

"There is a difference between the dasiri tree and its genie. If you sacrifice to the tree, you sacrifice to the dasiri, but do you not honor the dasiri alone? Is the tree not a mere object? It gives us nothing.

"Exactly, that's right.

776
782
539

"O fara n fasili-'ln te boli dé ni sétané tjé wa? Nibé boli dé son, i be Sétané son tigné, nka i be sétané bôgna doron, boli dé, héwa fen min yéra o dé te foufi gnâ.

"O té, djiné ni boli ma-n-kan, boli dé hen, an be fen min yé, o be fen gnâ dérén. Sétané an'o fen olou foula té ké boli yé wa?"

"Does this difference not exist between the boli and satan? If you sacrifice to the boli, you sacrifice to satan, that is certain; but you honor only the demon, and its object is no help to you.

"No, you haven't understood. A genie and a boli are not the same. The boli is bound to what we see; it is useful to us. Satan and his object, both together -- do they not make up the boli?"

Boli dé: An object in which is found the spirit the Negroes call Sétané, "Satan."

776 The gnéna, or djiné, half man and half angel, malicious though it is, can nevertheless do good and grant a direct blessing by performing a good act. But the gnâ, the boli, a fallen angel (méléké sifa do do, " it is a kind of angel"), in revolt against God and, as I stated in my chapter on God, condemned to the tortures of fire, is entirely evil and cannot directly do a good deed (1). It can never-

776
538

1. I challenge the European "Bambara scholars" of Ségou to listen to the two djéli (storytellers /griots/) of Goïn, a small village a short distance from this center. The sacred dances and songs of the boli are their specialty, and they travel over the

776
538 whole circle in the dry season. For example, the master of a Nama will give an account, and the storyteller will take up the refrain, which always ends: "I have told you truly, the Nama can refrain from evil, but it is capable only of evil (a ka fari, a ka djougou ko djougou). It is evil, very evil!"

776 theless refrain from an evil act and thus indirectly grant a blessing to human beings. The words of the formula in the sacrifices to the gnéna and the gnâ seem identical, and yet, when one has understood the inmost feelings of the Bambara soul, one sees all the difference between them. To one as to the other the Negroes say: "Ka dji d'amma (give us water), ka mousoou d'amma (give us wives), ka nafolo d'amma (give us wealth), etc." But while in speaking to the first they actually ask for water, wives, etc., they make an indirect request to the second, so that their words mean: "Do nothing to keep us from having wives," "do nothing to keep us from having water," etc. In expressing himself this way he uses all his cunning, and all his deceit comes to the surface and is revealed. Yes, he really deserves the epithet that neighboring tribes have given him and of which he is proud; it is misi bo, "cow dung," -- dry on the outside but limp and soft inside, so that it is squashed when it is stepped on. His inner feeling when he addresses the boli is this: "O Spirits, evil genii, you are capable only of evil; may your hatred not attack me or those who are dear to me, may it all be for my enemies and those that can harm me!" /130/

2. The Legend of the Boli

771 This is a very curious legend, for it makes the boli come from
798 Mecca, the holy city! To understand it better, let us remember in
778 passing that Islam has only made the Bambara more attached to their idols. They have died in order to keep them; they answered the

771 "believe or die" of the Moslems by taking up their spears, and when
798 they were conquered, reduced to servitude, and unable to continue
778 their worship openly, they remained true to the faith they received from their ancestors. Severed heads became the prey of vultures, and spilled blood flowed, but those that survived only became hardened. The Moslem conquerors, tired of striking and in need of slaves and manpower, had to admit their defeat in the field of religion.

Some fell away from the idols (slaves, and some rich people seeking to safeguard their lives and possessions), but their apostasy was strictly external and a lie, for they shouted the formula but in secret devoted themselves to their bloody rites, imbuing their children with their own faith and not that of their masters. A lie has never [577] been difficult for the Bambara; to know how to lie is for them more than half a virtue. Thus, when the right to freedom was proclaimed [667] in 1907, I was not at all surprised to see that out of nearly 5,000 slaves who spontaneously set themselves free, the majority returned to their homes or to the land of their fathers, forgot the formula, and declared themselves to be fetishists. They did not get initiated then since they already had been (1).

1. Those who took back their own freedom in 1907 were all slaves of the Moslems. The "Peulls" /Fulani/, a shepherd people, saw almost all their slaves escape. The Bambara in slavery kept their traditions as well as they could; in the Negro village of Biskra I found sons of the Bambara who did not know their own language and were fanatical Moslems, yet kept their tattoos, sacrificed to the family boli handed down by their fathers, danced the dance of the korodouga, and used the Bambara formulas and songs although they no longer understood them.

Since all the Bambara could not be made to submit to shameful servitude, the Moslems were satisfied to impose a tax, to forbid public worship of the idols, and, with sheathed sword, sought to make converts by persuasion. Their caravans were quick to cover the country, preaching Islam in all places both favorable and unfavorable, but the mass of the people could not be approached. In order to give /131/ their beliefs a rational basis, they always did everything in the name of "Alla, " "Stamboul" (the Sultan of Constantinople), and "Makka (Mecca), and said to the conqueror: "All true belief comes from Mecca (Makka); it is the center of all religious life, so why do you fight so hard against our boli? They all come from Mecca. God has given you the formula: 'there is no Divinity other than God and Mohammed is His prophet'; for you He prescribes ablutions, Friday rest, etc.. Keep your formula and shout it! To us Bambara He has given the boli and bloody sacrifices, so why do you want to take from us our treasures that are hungry for blood?" I do not doubt that we owe our "legend" to the discussions which arose between the m'rabet (the marabout, or Moslem priest) and the gnâtigi, or bolitigi. Here it is as I so often heard it told by bold old men:

A group of youths who were devoting themselves to trade and following lady luck (ou toumbe kolo (1) gnini, "they were seeking cowrie shells"), one day took the road to the east. Over mountains and valleys the little band walked and walked for a long time, and then finally they reached the great, blue, salty water, the ocean, on the shores of which lies the holy city, Mecca (Makka) (2).

1. Kolo, "cowrie shells" (singular, koké), small shells used as money.

2. Since the Moslems said that Mecca was located on the seacoast, and since the Bambara did not know Arabia, they believed it to be in this direction. In their minds the ocean does not have to be crossed to get there. Actually, this is the least of their worries.

Their stay there lasted several years, and no one expected to see them again. It was said that bandits had fallen upon them and massacred them or reduced them to slavery, and funeral rites were to be given them. The sanga fo (3) in their honor began; the women

3. Condolences from acquaintances to the family of the deceased.

wept, filling the air with their cries, and after several days of dancing, everybody went back to pleasure and work.

The young Bambara were not dead, they came back, and, better yet, were in no way stained by Mohammedanism. Even in the heart of Mecca they met a Bambara tribe, brothers who were thoroughly fetishist, and their secret rites, sacred dances, and sacrifices made more impression on their hearts and imaginations than the worn and cold formula, stupid prostrations, and tiresome /132/ ablutions of the sons of Islam. They were initiated into the rites of the gnâ, or boli; they bought some; and one fine day, rich in gold and silver, flocks of goats and sheep, women and slaves, they took the road back to the Niger. The caravan was large, the loads heavy, the road was barely passable, and discouragement touched the hearts of the bravest more than once. Finally, they reached the great river and the loads and boli filled boats by the hundreds.

The start of the voyage was happy; only a very few loads fell into the water and were lost going through rapids. Then a day came when everything changed; the wind started to blow violently; the water boiled, foamed, and swelled; and the boats, made of two hollowed tree trunks placed end to end and bound together with weak ropes, crashed together and broke. Who can tell how many disappeared in the floods that day with all their cargoes! The loss was great, especially in boli, but these have the power of gods, and they quickly changed into fish. According to the legend there have been torpedo fish, manatee, etc. in the depths of the river since that day.

Everything was not lost, however. When the travelers arrived in the Beledougou and the Ben-dougou (1), they still had a large stock

T73
T76
794

1. Bélédougou: bélé, "ferruginous rock"; dougou, "village," "country"; a province back of Bamako kati. Ben-dougou: bén, "meet"; dougou, "country"; the eastern end of Bambara country, on the Bani.

of boli. People came running from all directions. Of course there were festivals and amusements, and everyone wanted news and wished to learn about this Mecca which was so vaunted by the Moslems. "It is indeed a large city," they said, "but do not think that all they know there is the worn formula la ilah ill l'allah, which is shouted by the sons of the Prophet all day long. At Mecca there are Bambara (2) who sacrifice to genii as we do. They have additional rites that

2. This word Bambara (Bamana) of the legend denotes less the people than the religion, and it seems to me that it should be understood in the sense of kafri, as already indicated in speaking of the origin of the word Bambara. (As I pointed out /in Chap. IV, 3/ I believe its original meaning to have been "rebel" and not "son of the alligator" or of the fish ban ma, a kind of tench.)

you do not know; /133/ they know how to protect themselves from evil genii and demons; they sacrifice to the boli. The latter /boli/ are terrible. They kill anyone who insults or displeases them and actually have consideration only for those who give themselves to them and become their children. Thanks to them, our brothers in Mecca are rich and powerful and live to be old. They quickly discover thefts, lies, and adultery. In fact, the boli render justice, and whoever asks it of them cannot lie with impunity. The deepest insult against them is to call on them to witness a lie; they always take vengeance for this offense, causing endless evils to its perpetrator

T13
T18 and even going so far as tocause his death." These accounts excited
794 the Negroes' curiosity; they wished to see the boli, wanted to sacrifice to them. They gave themselves to the boli, and thus became their children.

Once the people were initiated, the travelers unveiled the mysteries to them, bound them by the law of secrecy. They imposed upon them the prohibition against admitting uninitiated men and women and children to their ranks, and the sects were formed. These have multiplied continuously; each boli has its own, and since the boli are male and female and produce children, they have become legion, and each village has sects and boli of its own. Although the
T18 worship of the boli has not destroyed that of the gnéna, or djiné, it
794 has long exceeded the latter; their sacrifices and drinking bouts are accompanied by an external pomp that has a different grandeur, and no important action is taken without their agreement. It can be asserted without fear of error that the worship of the gnâ, or boli, is the chief religion of the Bambara at the present time. It is the basis of union within families and the foundation of the sina-n-koun, or sworn friendship; through the boli the people of the same village are closely united, and this union extends from one village to another and from one province to another, since all members of a boli's sect are brothers and owe each other mutual assistance under certain specified circumstances.

In the Bambara's mind (and I have spoken of this at length in
T16 my chapter, "The Ideas of the Bambara are not of Islamic Origin"),
T18 the boli are nothing less than intrinsically evil beings in revolt against
T82 the Supreme Being, God the Creator and Lord of all things. As the formula of the sacrifice to Touafé Bla suggests, the place where they dwell is fire or hell, and there is not a Negro who will not tell you /134/ that the boli is a demon (sétané). Can it not be said that his religion is a worship rendered to "Satan himself?" He renders this worship in full knowledge of what he is doing. Have I not heard the sacrificer in a sacrifice to a Nama boli (1), shout before cutting the

1. A note by Father Coppe of the White Fathers (unpublished manuscript).

776
778
782

which I have before me, reports the same fact on the subject of the Komo boli. Moreover, this Father is a student of the Bambara -- when the Blacks of Ségou speak of him, they say, "Bamana-n-do," which means that he spoke and understood their language well.

throat of the victim of the general sacrifice: "Alla djampa ba, i k'an bla, i ka bo an koun na, God, great traitor, leave us, go away from us!" -- and the crowd repeated the blasphemy after him: "Alla djampa ba, i k'anbla, i ka bo an koun na!"

3. Boli Whose Power is Slight

776
778

Since the boli do not all have the same strength and power, and fear is the basis and foundation of Bambara worship, they are not all equally honored. We will divide them into two main groups, those of "little power" and those of "great power," and we will end this chapter with a word on the talking boli, the prerogative of certain sorcerers, and on the sirikoun, another, quite special, kind of boli.

778
278

By boli of little power I mean all evil fetishes which are basically not very terrifying, in the sense that it is thought that they very seldom cause anyone's death. Many of them are primarily medicines, and almost everyone has them. They are tails of cows, goats, dogs, and wild animals; they have no specific names and are generally called foura (2) ("medicine"). Additional "medicines" are the kana,

2. This name foura is given in a general way to all boli; I should therefore remark that the word "medicine" in the sense that we understand it, is not the exact translation of the word foura. This word is in itself untranslatable

778
278

into our language and means a force,
a conscious force, that opposes
another conscious force which seeks
to harm us, and destroys it.

horns and hoofs of bulls filled with an ointment the composition of which it is very difficult to specify: blood, fat, and dried, crushed glow-worms are combined with iron powder, charcoal, and other /135/ ingredients. They are the Bambara equivalent of the "pink" pills which cure all ills, including baldness and ingrowing nails -- and that sums it up. The kana of which I speak are boli, and differ from the kana possessed by each powerful boli, which are no longer boli but parts of boli. Let us quickly admit that the word kana is as indefinite as the word foura, and means primarily "that which protects, preserves, and keeps us from harm."

778
782
[456]

These little fetishes are not given festivals, and only their owners sprinkle them with blood and sacrifice to them. They cost little, and a sorcerer or the owner of a father foura or kana will make one for a modest sum varying between 5 kémés and a ba fla (5 kémés = 200 cowrie shells; ba fla = 1, 600 cowrie shells), which is from 5 sous to 2 francs.

224
778
782

Apart from the sorcerers, whose boli are innumerable, there is a whole group of people, the noumons (blacksmiths), the koulés (who dig canoes and mend broken gourds), the donzo (hunters), etc., who have such strong confidence in all these horrors that they would rather die of hunger than be deprived of them. The hunters all have some to make them active and alert. Before every hunt of the least importance there is a black pullet from each, and on the return another sacrifice is made, however unlucky the hunt may have been. The keeper of each fetish is usually the only one to pay respects to it. However, his brother hunters may give it a small offering, and it is understandable that they do so, since each fetish has its specialty. One is for deer, another for guinea fowl, a third for the big antelope (dadjé in Bambara and best known to Europeans under the name of koba, a word of the Peul language) or for the wild pig /facochère/, for the panther or the

224 lion, for the hyena or for the anteater, etc., and since each cannot
777 possess them all, one or the other is appealed to according to the
782 need of the moment.

The most interesting of this group of boli are the togo fen foula, which watch over the gun and arms of the hunter in a quite special way, protecting them from the ko nege ba, a greedy and rough hand which deprives a woman of her periods if she touches meat offered to it in sacrifice or game killed under its auspices, and from the tougourouna, which has consideration only for those who own it and makes all others /136/ powerless /the French word here is impuissant, meaning both "powerless" and "impotent"/ if they touch the meat of its sacrifices or game killed under its auspices (1).

1. Game killed under the auspices of a boli belongs to it just like the victims of a sacrifice, and if these are "taboo" for a class of people, the game similarly becomes taboo.

224 Along with the fetish some hunters also own the gnâma daha (2),
778

2. Gnâma, "force," "power," "malignant fluid"; daha, earthen receptacle called a conari.

a conari in which roots and leaves gathered at night by moonlight, here and there at random are simmered and soaked. When certain kinds of game, such as an anteater, for example, have been killed, the animal is washed with these roots and this juice of doubtful color. I have been told that the juice of the gnâma daha induces the flow of urine, so that the gnâma (3) of the animal leaves, its wild animal

3. See what I said about the gnâma in Chap. I, p. 17 ff.

smell disappears, and then the meat can be eaten (4). /137/

224
778

4. All Negroes do not resort to the gnâma daha. But then they are not limited to a single means of handling

[411
291
234]

Costume of a Bambara hunter.

the problem; they have more than one string to their bow. Immediately after killing a fur-bearing animal, every hunter empties the urine by pressure or cutting.

224 778 These little hunters' fetishes have no festival or formal sacrifice. Some ultimately gain great renown in the ranks of our "Nimrods," however, and then they come in large numbers bringing black pullets. The master of the idol then chooses a day for a strictly private drinking bout at which only initiates of the hunter sect are present.

778 596 The most powerful of all the boli whose influence is slight are the boli of the hut or the family, the familial boli to which the heads of families, the gouatigi, sacrifice. These take practically all shapes: they are horns, balls coated with blood resembling all the tubers of creation, all kinds of tomatoes and eggplants, napkin rings, etc. -- in sum, horrors, each wrapped in a very dirty, filthy goatskin. They are to be found hung in the b'lon, or entry hut, together with the ex voto, a package of goat skulls carefully emptied and stripped of flesh. The family boli are legion, and it is impossible to know them all. The most widespread and the most highly valued are the ma bara, the sirini, the bala, the bara, the baga (1), and

1. A boli is always made of several pieces, each with a special name. All these pieces are called boli dé. Among the boli dé there is one which is called boli dén fa. One piece of the baga is a thong which forms a belt that the sacrificer puts around his thighs, all covered with blood, before proceeding with the individual sacrifices. The baga protects against bullets, arrows, and spears. Some baga are famous, and Negroes go to find the masters of these fetishes and receive from them a small facsimile of the baga belt.

the bama-n-djigi.

At the annual sacrifice the gouatigi, or head of the family, offers a goat and at least a hen and a kola nut for each male child no matter how strained his circumstances or how slight his self-respect. He also offers d'lo, or millet beer, and all his family make merry. Some even do things in a big way, and although the whole village does not take part in the drinking bout, all the old men are invited, and many close friends come from everywhere.

The family boli take the interests of the head of the family in their hands; they are responsible for driving away illness and reverses of fortune. /138/ Through them one gains many descendants, wealth, wives, a happy and lively old age, honor and respect. They are also appealed to on all occasions in life that are of the slightest importance. Before a long journey is undertaken or a business venture is entered into, when a disaster threatens or there is a possibility of a piece of unhoped-for good fortune, they are reddened with a trickle of blood. Sacrifice is also made to them at harvest time (many are even called by the generic name of gno four, "millet medicine"), but especially at circumcisions and excisions, at betrothals, marriages, and funerals. The tne, or "taboo," of these fetishes (see above, p. 5ff.), is taboo for each wife's eldest son, and sometimes the whole family makes it its own.

4. Boli whose Power is Great

I call powerful boli all those gni of every shape and size whose worship is secret and in whose mysteries only those participate who have been initiated into the rites, after having sworn on their lives never to reveal them. Countless victims are offered to these boli; some of them are always warm and are ceaselessly reddened with blood. At the annual festivals not only is there a hecatomb of roosters and hens, but dogs and goats by the dozen also die, and in Bani country I have seen as many as five or six sacrificers working at the same time. This is the great and true Bambara worship, and it gives rise to orgies of four to eight days; it eclipses the ancient worship, that

of the gnéna, or djiné, and like it or not, the worship of the dead is trivial in comparison, a little devotion, one might say.

These boli are greatly feared and dreaded. They render justice and decide all controversies; they have the right of life and death over human beings; and it is through their intermediary that the Bambara avenge themselves and take reprisal on a real or imaginary enemy.

No victims are too fine for the powerful boli. There was a time when men were sacrificed to them -- I think that this cannot possibly be doubted. At the time of the Negro king N'golo, says the legend, a man of Faléma -- a small village on the road from Ségou to Koutiala which is now in ruins -- went to the king with his fetish /139/ Sa folo. The king had himself initiated, wanted to own it, and his first victim was the owner himself, the man from Faléma. If old men talk to you about the capture of Sikasso by the French, they will all tell you that, on the morning of the attack, men were sacrificed to the chief boli of the city. Were there not, in 1907, in a temple not far from Koutiala, a row of human skulls hung on the walls as ex voto? A little before the conquest, under the reign of the Moslem princes El-Hadj-Omar and Amadou, the master of he Nama fetish of Misango was asked to go to Ségou with his idol. He said he did not own one, but a woman betrayed him, and a search was made in Misango and its environs. The man was informed in time, and he changed the hiding place of his Nama, and the woman, convicted of lying, was given him as a slave in compensation. A little later, a sacrifice of thanksgiving was offered to the fetish, and the traitorous woman was among the victims. She was old, and the god considered her too tough; he ordered that she be sold and some children be bought, since they were victims worthy of it. Its orders were carried out, "for," say the storytellers who sing it praises, "when sacrifice is made to the Nama one must never forget nzégéné dégé (1), honey, two red

1. Millet flour and nzégéné (Balanites oethiopica).

roosters, two red kola nuts, and one dégenéni, an infant of two to three months."

Since the French occupation and the suppression of slavery, human beings are no longer sacrificed regularly. All the legends give one to understand, moreover, that they were always unusual and very infrequent. Yet who will ever be able to say what took place, and what still takes place nowadays at night in those sacred groves which only initiates can enter? One can always imagine that, lacking sacrifices, the initiates of the siri, the fetish of the souba or soubaga, disinter corpses in order to have human blood to offer to their idol and human flesh to taste. It is a unanimous belief among all the Negroes that they do so, and no sacrifice is made to the gnéna, to the gnâ, or to the shades of ancestors without a repetition of the words: "Protect us from the souba," -- in other words: "Protect us against the initiates of siri." These souba, of which I have already spoken /140/ in my chapter on metamorphosis (see above, p. 29), do not seem to differ in any way from the occult religious sects of the Basêzi of Uganda and the Baswêzi of the Ouchirombo, the cannibals of the equator.

And of what are they made, all these boli that for the most part have their temples and their sacred groves? A little of everything, I think, goes into the making of these horrors. Many times have I untangled these blood-coated gods and found only the bark of trees, roots, horns of goats, deer, and bulls, and finally claws of almost all quadrupeds. It is said that the Komo of Tigini, 30 or 35 kilometers from Ségou, is the body of a child. The legend says it was made by one Kari, the great-great-grandfather of the man who owns it at present, and this miserable man pushed barbarism to the point of taking his first grandson, a few months old, and grinding him alive in a mortar. An almost identical legend is current about the Komo of Kégné in Bani country which is at present in the hands of quite a young man called Marka N'zan. It is even said that if the first child of the owner of this latter fetish is a boy it belongs to the Komo. Is this child sacrificed or do they simply poison him? I have nothing definite on this matter.

118 All these are obviously legends and I give them as such, not having been able to assure myself of the facts de visu; I maintain, however, that they may be true. I broke open not a Komo, but a Kono, which was the torso of a child three to four years old.

Some boli, like the Tji wara and the Nama, are made of wood; others, like the Douga, consist of a considerable number of bulls' horns. They also take on almost all shapes, and when one opens the dirty goatskins that serve as their tabernacles, one finds horns and napkin rings, and among them balls suggesting all the fruits and tubers of creation, and one has to be more than an initiate to recognize the main item in this conglomeration. There are also some that resemble a crude doll whose arms are two horns; others are in the form of a hippopotamus, a cow, or an elephant, and in the Magna of Zambala on the Bani, in the circle of Sikasso, I even saw a little horse.

The boli are always composed of several pieces called boli dé, among which is the boli den fa, a little larger /141/ and rounder than the others because it receives the first trickle of blood and the mouthful of chewed kola nut. Some boli are strictly male or female, and others, like the Nama and Tji wara, for example, are mated and live in their temples with the females. The latter always resemble their husbands; they are less strong, but that is all. These fetishes, especially those that are famous, feared, and dreaded, often stay hidden, and their covering is not taken off until the moment of sacrifice.

118 191 158 The worship of the powerful boli is more complicated than that of the gnéna, or djiné, and an entire staff is needed to serve them. First, there is the owner of the fetish, the gnâtigi, or bolitigi, and the sacrificer, the mouroukalatigi. These are helped in their duties by two wara da (also called waraminadé), who are intermediaries between the fetish and its owner (1). It is through them that the genie

118 191 1. The Komo being the most famous in the province of Ségou, it is the staff of this fetish I am giving here. The others have staffs that are similar, but

778
791

of course the names change a little. On the staff of the Nama there are not only warada but also djenfa tje and djenfa mouso, who go through the village to exorcise /all evil from/ it, holding the fetish in their hands or putting it over their faces. They are preceded by a torch bearer, who is usually the darotigi, or beadle. Some fetishes, the Kono for example, have a person especially responsible for carrying it to the place of sacrifice. He performs the duties of the darotigi; the one who carries the Kono is quite often called Kono guenguéba.

778 makes known its wishes and gives its orders; and when it does so, its
791 spokesman is always seized by an epileptic attack followed by
158 catalepsy. When he has spoken he is brought out of this state by being sprinkled with consecrated water, and he goes back to his place as if nothing unusual had happened. He seems to feel no fatigue, his features are composed; and yet only a moment earlier his body ran with sweat, his limbs shook with nervous trembling, his eyes were wild and starting out of their sockets, saliva that was often tinged with blood ran from his mouth, and his breath was whistling and irregular.

778 The gnâ also has its beadle, the darotigi, who rings for the
791 sacrifice, thus warning the initiates to come quickly and the uninitiated to stay in their huts. Since he also sings the praises of the fetish while ringing his bell, he is also called /142/ gnâ djéli, storyteller /griot/ of the gnâ. To all these are added the band of members and initiates, whose function consists chiefly in providing the food and beer for the orgies. These are the gnako dé-n-ou, children of the gnâ.

778 One becomes master of a gnéna, or djiné (1), by election or
425

778
425

1. The sinsin, the gnéna of twins, is an exception, as it may also be bought.

inheritance, and rarely by purchase. The gnâ pass from father to son by inheritance, but it is always possible to obtain one by purchase; all that is necessary is to find in the village the number of people needed to make up the staff of the idol, provided one is not opposed by the sorcerer's veto.

Every purchase of a powerful boli occasions celebrations, festivals, and drinking bouts that last from three to eight days. These festivals are like marriage celebrations. Surrounded by his staff, the new fetish owner spends the day offering d'lo, or millet beer, to the many friends who come to congratulate him and give him their gifts. It is not until evening that he leaves his b'lon, or entry hut, and, followed by initiates carrying the idol, goes to the sacred grove or under the trees chosen to be the meeting place henceforth. The night is spent in dancing and shouting hymns.

In the eyes of the Negro to buy a gnâ is to become united with it in a firm and indissoluble way. It is equivalent to marrying the fetish, and they have no other phrase to express their idea, their notion of the matter: "A yé boli fourou, he got married"; "ayé boli fourou gosi, he has stamped and sealed his marriage with the boli" (2); "ne ka fourouboloma faro (3) fé, here is my wedding present";

[583]

2. Fourou gosi: In order to enjoy the marriage lawfully, whoever marries must, in the presence of the head of the village, pay his wife's parents a handful of kola nuts -- usually eleven, one more than the required ten.

431
SB

3. Fourouboloma fara: This is the name of the small present of cowrie shells given to a

431
585

/newly married/ couple by their friends. It varies from 40 cowrie shells to 2 kémés, or 160 cowrie shells.

778
425 "a taboli konio kera, the marriage of his boli has taken place."

[illegible] The value of a gnâ varies between 30 and 40 francs, and whoever owns one can from then on make them. If one counts the presents given to the maker and to his staff, the dogs, goats, and kola nuts offered in sacrifice on the day of his reception, and finally the beer of the wedding, its value is undoubtedly more than 100 francs.

5. Differences among the Powerful Boli

778 I class all the powerful boli into three main groups. In the first I place those which formerly were the prerogative of kings, princes, and ministers; in the second, those which have neither temple nor sacred grove; and in the third, those which have a temple and a sacred grove, or at least one or the other.

Those of the first group are not at all numerous, and the most popular are the Safolo, the Kongoba, the Nan-Woloko, and the Kouantara. They are usually found in villages which were formerly capitals of cantons or provinces and are in the hands of people whose families have included a kafotigi (head of a canton) or a fama (king or petty king), i.e., a head of a province, a minister of the king on whom the title of ruler (fama) was bestowed.

Everything leads me to think that in the beginning these were merely fetishes responsible for watching over the king and the people of his court, analogous to what above I have called the family boli. At present they have become boli of sects. But although all circumcised men can enter the ranks of those who pay them respect, only married men become initiated, and the orgies in their honor are private orgies whose entire cost is borne by graybeards.

778 782 According to legend, slaves were sacrificed to these boli in the time of the Bambara kings. Since then the worshippers have been content to offer them millet beer, hens, and goats in addition to the

kola nuts required in every sacrifice. All the people of the village rejoice at the annual sacrifice. From the goat hut, where hangs the goatskin that serves as its tabernacle (1), the fetish is carried in procession to the place of sacrifice, a large tree that casts a little shade inside the village. During the procession the initiates shout sacred hymns at the tops of their voices, drums and xylophones beat and rumble, and all the circumcised stop when it passes /144/ and reverently bare their heads. The women and the uncircumcised kneel and bow their heads respectfully at the passing of the idol, which is hidden from profane view by a dirty cloth covering.

1. The Bambara, whose huts are usually very clean, put their gods away in dark, filthy corners. The temples are small and have such low doors that it is often necessary to lie prone in order to enter.

The boli of the second group are legion, and it is very difficult to know all of them. The main two are the Tji wara and the Douga.

A Tji wara seldom gives evidence of its power. Although it may kill its owner or anyone who happens to separate the male from the female in the course of the sacred dance, a Negro is seldom heard to blame it for the death of one of his family. This fetish is made of two forked sticks, one male and the other female, on which sacrifices are made. It may be seen hanging in the entry hut of its master, along with its cloak of false-cedar bark and its mask which are used in the sacred dance.

The mask of the Tji wara is tastefully made; in fact, it is the best Bambara sculpture I have seen. It is carved of the wood of the dondol (Bombax cornui) and seems intended to represent a goat or a deer. The male often has curved horns and sometimes measures almost a meter in height. The female is smaller, its horns are straight, rings hang from its nose and ears and, no doubt because a goddess could not be sterile, it carries its child on its back.(1) During the

778
532

1. It is easy to obtain a mask of the tji wara. Many colonials bring them back from the Sudan, but they are mistaken in speaking of it as a "Sudanese fetish." This mask and all the other masks, including the twins' doll, are not "fetishes" at all. They externalize for the Negroes their idea of the genie -- sétané -- which animates the object to which they sacrifice. /Placement of this footnote is editor's emendation, the original gives it on following page 153/.

During the sacred dance the Negroes, decked out in mask and cloak, are bent double and constantly in motion. From time to time they bellow into a bull's horn. Since they cannot stand straight without failing [516] in respect for the idol, they stretch out on the ground or crouch on all fours when they are tired and weary.

778
782

At the time of the arrival of the bani-n-kono (storks), a little before the rainy season, a sacrifice of dogs, goats, and hens is offered to the Tji wara. This fetish is especially venerated by youths; they ask it for strength, health, and earnestness in work. Thus, when young people get together to cut shrubs and make a new field in the midst of the bush or to pull out weeds in the winter, a goat is sacrificed; and they work to the sound of the drum and the tji wara bellowing into his horn. Upon their return from the field, the workers are given millet beer; then the sacred dance begins in the public square /145/ and continues far into the night, to the great delight of the women and children.

778

The douga consists of a fairly large number of bulls' horns enclosed in a goatskin. It is hung in the entry hut, and it is there its altar is set; this altar is a square column of earth attached to one of the corners of the room. It often measures a meter in height; the

118 corner that is visible is decorated with horns, and a conari, a receptacle of baked earth, is fastened to the platform to catch the overflow of victims' blood. This receptacle is always surrounded by a little hedge made of porcupine quills, which gives the whole arrangement a somewhat fancy appearance.

118 More terrible than the tji wara, it is popular with some people;
182 the Negroes readily appeal to it when they want to take revenge on an enemy. Nor is it unusual to hear a Bambara blame if for the death of one of his family, and since several victims are offered whenever such situations and occasions arise, it receives a good sprinkling of blood from here and there. A great sacrifice is made to it annually, and on the assigned day dogs, goats, and hens are offered to it. Following the sacrifice, the initiates meet at the home of one or another of the most influential members of the sect, and the day is spent emptying jugs of millet beer and getting drunk.

The specialty of the douga is to protect people from snake bites. Nevertheless the Bambara sacrifice to it to some extent for everything. From it, as from the others, they ask for wealth, wives, rain in the winter, etc., etc. (2).

2. In every sacrifice there is the sacramental consumption of part of the meat and objects offered to the idol. These present partake of this communion at the actual site of the sacrifice and without any seasoning whatever.

118 Many other /boli in this category/ could be mentioned; for example, there is the da, to which the Bambara sacrifice in order to have a good harvest. But, although these are terrible, they are still not the boli which they really fear and dread and to which /146/ they sacrifice continuously throught their lives. The latter form a separate group; they have temples and sacred groves, nothing is done without them, and they are always being taken out of their stinking dens and filthy temples. Men, women -- everybody worships and consults

778 them, they have unlimited power. They render justice, oaths are taken on them, they exorcise all evils to some degree, they give fertility to the sterile, they have the right of life and death over human beings, and it is to them that appeal is made for vengeance on an enemy.

[291 534]

Nia ngoni: the harp of the Nia fetish

778 534 Chief among these fetishes are the Komo, the Nama, the Kono, the Nia, the Wara (or Djara), the Djo and the Magna, also called Tjaro fign. All of them have their special drums and musical instruments, and some, like the Nia and the Magna, even have an entire band. The band of the Nia consists primarily of guitars, skin bags, and small baskets in the shape of hourglasses filled with stones or bits of scrap iron. That of the Magna consists of one or /147/ two long

778 drums and a fairly large number of antelope horns (1). These are tuned
534

1. The old men say that before the Moslem invasion of Omar el Hadj, the musicians blew into elephant tusks. The tusks were confiscated because of the ivory and were replaced by horns of the great antelope, which the Europeans call by the Peul name, koba.

by means of a wooden bell, and each gives a special note and tone.
778 In fact, Bambara music is the sweetest and the least shrill that I have
533 heard. Moreover the Negroes enjoy
[534] it; one day at Bagini on the Bani, when three such bands gave a concert together, the women were so happy, so pleased and moved by the charm of its sweetness, that they took off their bracelets, earrings, and nose rings and laid them at the feet of the musicians.

Horned iron tube, trumpet of the Komo fetish (seen at Bagini in Bani country at the home of Boya, head owner of the fetish; it is between 0.30 and 0.35 meters long.

The Komo, the Kono, and the Nama have the wildest music there is -- trumpet blasts and frightful bellowings that freeze one with
778 terror. In the Komo music, an iron tube which is part of the fetish
534 is blown into, and the initiates, warada darotigi, accompany the sacred songs on bamboo pipes. The pipes of the Kono are bulls' horns (2), and the sounds that come out of them are real roars. Those of

2. To make these pipes the Negroes cut the tip of the horn and close the opening with a spider's web.

178 the Nama are made of bamboo and smaller than those of the Komo.
534 The big instrument here is the drum which is beaten with a bent iron rod. The syncopation is given on the bass drum which is wooden; the vibrations of the skins stop, and one would say that the sound is the knock of a bone that is broken clean; it gives one the shivers.

The Komo is always most carefully hidden, and one has to be-
178 long to the village to know in which hut it dwells. The main parts of the fetish are enclosed in baskets just like those used for transporting cotton, but three iron rods (3) on which /148/ sacrifices are made

> 3. In the presence of the uninitiated these sticks are called Komo djoloko, and (again so that none of the mysteries will be revealed) the warada, those who speak in the name of the idol, are called djoloko samana, "those who carry the chains of Komo."

are usually kept in the skin of a striped cat. The Nama lives under a tamarind tree outside the village and has a beehive for a tabernacle.
[417] The whole thing is surrounded by a djasé, a kind of palisade made of coarse mats which hides from the uninitiated both the hive and the receptacle into which the remainder of the victims' blood is poured.

178 The Nia and the Wara, or Djara, have round huts surmounted
346 by conical thatch roofs. While the first is inside the village, the second is always outside at one of the entrances. The Kono has a square house with a flat terrace roof. It is always decorated with small bells fastened by lines on which are hung skulls of dogs and goats that have been sacrificed. Usually, if not always, it faces the inside of the village. The Magna does not have a temple strictly speaking, but it has its altar, a round turret surmounted by a receptacle
[824] to receive the blood of victims. It is outside the village and always under a silk-cotton tree (Eriodendron anfractuosum -- kapok tree).

178 The Komo is equipped with a jointed mask and a cloak made of feathers of guinea fowl, hens, etc., which are used for the sacred dance. By means of a stick which the feather cloak hides from sight,

118 the dancer raises or lowers his mask, and at night, in the dim light of the fires, one might think it a dwarf demon which alternately grows little by little and then becomes smaller again. /149/ The Kono also has a mask. It is not jointed, and its cloak is not variegated like that of the Komo, for all its feathers are those of the djougo (1), which

Mask of the Kono fetish

1. A large black bird the French name of which I do not know.

are black.

All these fetishes are made up of a fairly large number of objects. Among the chief pieces there is usually a horn called kana, and a sirikoun which is used to will death to one's enemy and at the same time shield oneself from it. The principal part of the Kono, called boli den fa, is a kind of ragged doll with two horns for arms.

4: Henry--158 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

778 [534] In the Komo an important part is played by three iron tubes, one of which is used as a trumpet (2). The most interesting and original

2. Tama guengueba is its name.

unquestionably is the Nama, which consists of two wooden heads called koungolo Nama ("heads of the Nama"); one, the male, is called tjéma and the other, the female, is called mousoma.

The Nama Fetish

These two heads seem to represent two fantastic birds, and the illusion created is complete when, preceded by the darotigi who shakes his bell and carries a lantern, the djenfa mousoou (3) run

3. The term applied to those who are permitted to take the heads in their hands.

through the village and around its walls looking for siri. It becomes even stronger when they place the heads on their foreheads and mingle

778 with the dancers /150/ who, with torsos naked to the waist, gesticulate and shout their sacred songs to the sound of drums and pipes:

778 539 A djigina so, gnâ, ma fambali, a djigina so, tjon k'a e.
He is our guest, the gnâ, great killer of men, he is our guest tjon k'a é.
A fiéréla ka dén, boli fiéréla ka dén.
He has blossomed to bear, to bear his fruits; this boli has blossomed, he has his fruit.
Soubaou, yo, nin kéra malo ko ye.
Souba, yo, this is done because of shame.
Soubaya kéra, dabali bé an ko yé.
Someone has devoted himself to the practices of the souba, we have a means of saving ourselves.

778 Nor does sacrifice to the Nama fail to be impressive. Only
782 members of the staff enter the enclosure where the beehive used as its tabernacle is located. The crowd of members remains outside, and no one approaches the palisade before it is his turn to give a sacrificial hen and kola nuts to the sacrificer. While the idol is being reddened with blood (1), /151/ two men, naked to the waist and facing the

778 171 1. The Nama of the Malinké is absolutely identical with that of their Bambara brothers. At Bendougouba, a village of the Kosilanbougou culture near Kita, there is a Nama, and one can identify the words as they are very nearly the same.

Bambara	Malinké
Male Nama: Tjema	Male Nama: Kema
Female Nama: Mousoma	Female Nama: Mousoma
The Nama protects chiefly against initiates of the siri, who are said to eat human flesh and are called souba.	The Nama protects against the soubaga, identical with the souba. It comes from Misèngo in Bélédougou.

778
171

The Nama comes from Misango, a province of Bélédougou.

The Nama is sometimes called Souyakoro, Namakoro, and its diamou, or lineal name, is Sirima-n-fign.

The palisade around the Nama is called djasé; the receptacle for the blood, da.

The horned pieces of wood are called wara se and gné bla, djenfa mousoou, djenfa tjeou, sometimes called waraou.

The master of the Nama at Misango, which is father of all /Nama/ is at present Tjema-n-djan; out of respect all masters of the Nama of Misango are called Foura tigiba.

There are three names for one and the same thing, say the Negroes of Kita: Souyakoro, Namakoro, and Sirimafing.

The palisade is called djasa; the receptacle, daga.

The horned pieces of wood are called gnâ bla and ko bla Wara, or Waradjeli or gnâ Wara.

Out of respect all masters of the Nama of Misango are called Foura tigiba (foura, "medicine"; tigiba, "great master").

778
782

crowd, stand immobile on each side of the sacrificer and hold in their hands two pieces of wood about a meter long on which are tied three rams' horns (wara se) and two horns /sic/ (gné bla). It is an honor, even a distinction, to hold these horned pieces of wood, and these men are called djenfa tjéou.

Two annual sacrifices are offered to the boli of this group: one before the rainy season when, the Negroes say, the male and female idols mate, and the other about three months later, a little before harvesting begins when the grain is almost ripe. This is the time when the female idols give birth to their offspring, the best time to buy fetishes and to have fourou and konio made, because, as I said

before, whoever wants to own a boli must unite with it in as close a bond as if he were contracting a fourou marriage. In order to seal this union he must offer kola nuts, fourou gosi (1), to the village head and

1. The tribute which every man must pay if he wishes to enjoy his marriage legitimately.

the elders, in short, have a wedding (konio).

Women, uncircumcised men, and the uninitiated are never present at the sacrifices and festivals in honor of the fetishes of which I speak. However, I have seen women summoned to clap their hands and sing the praises of the Komo or the Kono. On the nights of the festivals they stay inside the village, and paths leading to the square where they are gathered are closed with kara, or coarse mats. Near them they hear the roar of trumpets and horns, and from time to time, above the mats, the silhouette of a hideous mask appears in sight and freezes them with fear and terrifies them, but in the dark of the night they cannot see details and are not able to say what they have seen. When the Nama is brought out (2), the women are summoned at day-

2. The phrase "to bring out the Nama" is my translation for the Bambara expression, Nama bora, which means that a sacrifice to the idol has been made, and that the night is spent in shouting and dancing the sacred dances. The Negroes also have the expression, a djigina so, "he came to visit us at home," (a djigina, ("he visited us at"...; so, "our home"). These expressions are used in relation to all boli.

break at the moment when the god is put back into his beehive, and

778 /152/ at the foot of the tree under which the initiates shouted and
782 danced all night, they are shown the siri found by the djenfa tjéou (1)
562

1. Djenfa tjeou: those who run with heads of the Nama.

and the darotigi, or darotala (2). While these siri (3) are burned, the

2. Darotigi, or darotala: he who rings the bell and precedes the djenfa tjéou with a lantern.

[754]

3. The siri are sacred objects which initiates of siri, the souba, throw here and there in the environs of the village in order to cast evil spells and sorcery on persons to whom they wish harm. Every time the Nama is brought out 20 to 40 siri are found. These small amulets /sic/, made of a little of everything, including trouser buttons, hooks, and belt buckles, tremble and moan while the women watch them. I have been present several times at this performance but have never perceived these tremblings and moanings, doubtless because I am not a Negro.

women dance and sing the praises of the idol.

778 The boli have two days of rest a week, Monday and Thursday
782 (4). It is nevertheless permissible to sacrifice to them on these days,

[304]

4. They rest in the sense that a festival at which they preside, e.g., a circumcision, never takes place on those days.

TH 782 and on Sunday evening (tné sou, "the night of Monday"), the initiates of the Komo like to go out or, if you like, dance their dances and shout their sacred hymns. Since the boli preside at all important events of life, circumcisions, marriages, deaths, etc., I will speak of the admission to the sects of these fetishes and the sacrifices offered to them when I discuss these matters. I will say, however, before closing this paragraph, that at no time or season does a village let a week go by without offering a sacrifice to the great boli which they own or dancing their dances. The staff of these fetishes is feared, dreaded, respected, and honored, and on days of celebration their owners are in the place of honor and sit next to the gnéna-n-sonnaba (religious head of a village), or at least next to the sotigi (civil head).

TH 782 695 In addition to the formal sacrifices at which the initiates are present, the great boli receive homage, tribute, and great streams of blood from individuals: appeals for their intervention are made constantly. Over a mere nothing an oath on such a fetish -- called kali boli la (5) is required, and if a dispute arises between two families,

5. There is a slight difference between kali boli la and boli sien. To take the oath called kali boli la is to swear on the fetish that one is telling the truth, that one is innocent. Only the accuser sacrifices. Seven straws must be fastened onto the object called sirikoun, and the accused, blara boli koro, is placed under the boli -- his life is placed in its hands -- and is to die if he has lied. In performing the boli sien, the accuser and the accused both sacrifice. Here again seven straws are fastened onto the sirikoun, and the accused is placed in the fetish's power twice:

778
782
695

first by the accuser and a second time of his own accord (a blara boli koro, "the accuser places him under the boli"; a y'i bla boli koro, "the accused has placed himself under the fetish").

a boli sien (5) is needed, for the fetish must again be called on to be

/See footnote 5 immediately preceding./

a witness. /153/ These oaths entail heavy expenses, for one hen is seldom enough and a goat is very often necessary. I have seen four or five dogs, equal to an expenditure of 20 to 30 francs, sacrificed over a trivial matter.

778
782 The three chief sacrifices offered by individuals are the fani-nké (1), the gnénama fani (2), and the sou fani (3). The first is made

1. Fani, "small throat cutting"; ké, "to make."

2. Gnénama, "one who has life," "alive."

3. Sou, "corpse."

to obtain a favor, to place oneself in the good graces of the fetish; the second, to preserve one's life, to escape a death already decreed; and the third is offered to appease a fetish whom one blames for the death of a relative (4) and to entreat it to spare the survivors of the

[74]

4. Eighty times out of 100, without exaggeration, death is blamed on a boli fetish.

778 family.
782 At the end of every important sacrifice, all the objects which make up the fetish are washed in the blood that has collected in the earthen receptacles called da, and it is not until after this operation, performed in the deepest silence, that the objects are replaced in their goatskins.

778 551 Negroes like to give the name of the fetish to children born at times of great sacrifices. I would even say that in studying the "names of people" one learns to know the gnâ, or boli, the gnéna, or djiné, and becomes initiated into the usages and customs of the country.

Names of children dedicated to the Komo, the most popular in the district of Ségou: Boli, boli ba, Néné, Nono, Négé son (or Négi son) (5), Togo-ba-tjé (6). /154/

5. Négi son: sacrifice to iron. Sometimes the word Komo is left unspoken out of respect, and the child is designated by one of the pieces of the fetish. The objects mentioned in the case of the Komo are three iron tubes (négi), sometimes called Komo djoloko ("chains of the Komo") in the presence of the uninitiated. The tube used as a trumpet is called tama guengueba.

6. Togo, "name"; ba, "big"; tjé, "man," etc.

Names of children dedicated to the Nama, the most important fetish after the Komo: Djasé, Sirima, Namakoro, Nama (1).

1. Djasé, the palisade which surrounds the sanctuary of the Nama. Sirimafign is the diamou, or family or lineal name, of the Nama.

778
551 Children dedicated to the Nia: Nia-gné foula, Nia-n-ti, Nia-n-nkoro, Nia.
Children dedicated to the Kono: Nièlé, Tjétjélé, Djonké (2).

[576] 2. Djonke, a respectful appellation often applied to the master of the Kono. Tjétjélé, the password of the initiates of the Kono and its family name, or diamou. When a stranger appears at the sacrifice, he is asked the question: "E b'a la wa Wélema djonké? Are you of the sect of Wélema djonké?" Only a brother can answer: "Tjétjélé, ne b'a la. Tjétjélé, I am."

Children dedicated to the Magna: Ma-n-djé, Magna, Magné.
Children dedicated to the Djo: Djo, Djokoro, Djoméné.
Children dedicated to the Douga: Dougakoro, Douga-n-tjé.
Children dedicated to the Da: Dakoro, Da-n-son, Da-n-wélé.
Children dedicated to the Bala: Bala, Balake, Mousa and Misa (3).

3. Mousa and Misa are synonyms of Bala and not a translation of the name Moses.

778
572 It is also on a powerful boli, or rather in its presence, that the Bambara swear to an indissoluble friendship, a friendship so close that it finds the two persons and their children like a kinship tie. This is the sinnakoun! No Negro has ever been able to talk to me about it with any clarity or precision, so that I am unable to give it a very exact definition. Basing my interpretation on the custom -- widespread among the Bambara -- of a woman showing her breast in order to indicate clearly that she is the mother of a child (a wolo ba, "his

778 572 mother who bore him"), and on the phrase sinna dé meaning "a child at the breast," I believe I can give this meaning to the word sinnakoun ("head," "tip of the breast": or again, "because of the breast"): "Between us it is as if we had sucked the same breast; therefore, we are like brothers." And /155/the persons bound by this type of friendship regard themselves as such, exchanging witticisms and light jokes without ever quarreling. Yet the Negroes are very sensitive and hardly ever allow joking. Seing such friends one would take them for kanémé, and the latter are relatives since they are maternal cousins (1).

1. A woman's children and the children of her brothers are kanémé to each other. Sinnakoun and kanémé are not impediments to marriage.

The sinnakoun between families dates from time immemorial; it appears to have no history, or at least I was unable to persuade anyone to tell me what it is. In any case, one can believe that it is a friendship sworn on a boli, or in its presence if you like, since nowadays two heads of families who wish to be united, to be sinnakoun, together redden a powerful fetish.

6. Talking Boli

778 761 These are supposed to bring death to anyone who scorns them. Nevertheless, they are seldom blamed for death, and they bring chiefly evil spells, sorcery, and sickness. They are in the hands of so-called sorcerers, real leeches who go through villages in the dry season, always holding out their hands and begging.

778 791 A talking boli is usually the tail of an animal and the sacrifices are made on this tail. The owner always has his instrument in an unusual skin, often the hide of a small wild animal, and he lets an end protrude. That, I believe, is his insignia, his mark of identification, unless it be the small bell he hangs on the paws of the hide and which he knows so well how to shake in order to notify people of his arrival.

The Bambara consult these sorcerers to find out the future and to draw their horoscopes or good luck. The fee for a seance is not at all unreasonable; it seldom exceeds the moderate sum of 40 cowrie shells, or one sou.

Concerning the Sirikoun

Every great boli includes an object called sirikoun. There are other sirikoun which are no longer parts of boli, but have become actual boli. The latter are hung at the waist and are always /156/ covered with a red cloth. Almost everyone owns them, although they are most frequently in the hands of the owners and sacrificers of great fetishes. They are usually ends of the tails of cows, horses, wild pigs, etc., and are often sprinkled with blood. They are sought in order to cast a spell or sorcery on an enemy, to make him sick, and even cause him to die, or again to protect oneself from a spell, sorcery, sickness, or death.

The sirikoun and the talking boli are fetishes belonging to individuals; they have neither festivals nor formal sacrifices, and they are not publically worshipped.

Chapter 8

The First Years in the Life of a Bambara

1. The Sexual Morality of the Bambara

Those who have seen the Bambara and have the slightest acquaintance with them will not hesitate to tell you: "They are liars and thieves." They certainly never pass up a chance to take the property of another, and they lie boldly and with such complete calm that not a muscle in their bodies flinches. This has always surprised

181 me, and it seems to me that the Bambara might describe himself as: "A man sufficiently master of himself to be able always to agree with you without ever revealing his inner thoughts."

Their character is not made up entirely of vices, however, and I have been told by earnest men that the Bambara never, at least in public, practice those familiarities with women which shock and wound every person of high principles. They have added that the two [674] crimes of adultery and fornication are unusual with them, and this, one may be sure, is less on account of the severe penalties which they incur (it seems that before the French conquest the punishment was death without reprieve), than because they are without feelings, that 181 is, strong passions. Their women can without any difficulty go around 291 with bare bosoms, breasts exposed, hips girded with a paltry rag knotted under the navel, and their young girls are satisfied with their small strip of cloth, three fingers wide, which is knotted in front at the waist, slides between the legs, and is caught up in back by the cord, to fall in a long train decorated by a gorgeous pompon the size of a fist. They did not tell me, of course, but /158/ they gave me to understand quite well that if it were absolutely necessary the girls could without blushing go around in the scant garb of children who roll in the dust dressed as on the day they were born, quite naked. Nakedness cannot stir a Negro; beauty does not excite his eyes, for he does not have the feeling for it. And for a long time I believed the Bambara to be endowed with an angelic nature.

181 All these beautiful thoughts have left me, and I must admit 831 that the Bambara are hideously degraded! Every day has made the matter clearer to me, for when I have left the mission to go to the surrounding villages, as the duties of my office oblige me to do several times a week, I have seen the same scenes again and again, heard the same songs and the same conversations, and I have found nothing very angelic in any of them. If I went into a field, I saw young men bent over their hoes, backs running with sweat, who got up and jumped, shouted the most raucous "you you," and made an obscene gesture. If a little girl, a child, came to give them a jug of cool water, she would get a coarse word as thanks and payment, and often, not to say almost always, a rough hand would remind her

181 that she is a girl, that one day she will be a man's plaything, an
831 object for his pleasure. The child would leave smiling and replace her three fingers of rag even as she walked away. At dinner time a
[148] big girl would come carrying the gourd of rô, or sorghum gruel, on her head, and on the palm of her right hand, at shoulder height, the platter of dried fish sauce. She would be greeted from as far away as she could be seen and asked for a report on her whole body, and indeed there would be no stopping at "how are your feet" nor even at "how are your breasts." And the girl would answer all these vile questions without getting excited, and when a well-washed hand, ready to be used as a spoon, embraced her or lifted her breasts, she was not shocked; only the opposite would surprise her.

887 Here and there in the village a giant tree stretches its branches
538 afar, and the old men, lovers of endless palaver, enjoy themselves
521 under its shade. They go there from the early morning to weave cloth, make mats, tan hides, scour goats' horns intended for powerful amulets, etc., and often even /159/ just for the purpose of spending the hours dozing. And in the midst of all these gray, or at least graying, beards, swarms a world of children. Among the old men there are good storytellers /conteur/, who excel in stories of hunting and war that throb with interest -- but why, alas, must they always graft on some salacious incident? Their mouths are full chiefly with
[831] stories of adultery and fornication. They will not spare you a single detail, and they will readily go back to the very beginning so as to lack no precision whatever. And the moral of these stories can be reduced to this: "There is nothing in this world comparable to the pleasures of the flesh; let us enjoy marriage and never pass up a chance to obtain this satisfaction."

524 If the old men are this lewd, is it surprising to hear the young
831 men describe the ugliness of their bestial evenings while they make
864 mats, stretch the hides of drums, or sew a blouse, a cap, or trousers for themselves in the b'lon, or entry hut? They talk constantly of their soungourou, and this term, which should simply mean an unmarried girl, means any woman, married or not, who gives herself to the first comer.

Without any shame they talk and chat about all these vile acts before their little brothers, before children ten and twelve years old,

52| and before little girls, and it is not unusual to see a big girl leaning
83| against the door of the hut with ears wide open so as not to miss a
864 word, and finding cause to burst into gales of laughter. Are all these people capable of being shocked? I doubt it, even as far as the young girls are concerned, for all or almost all of them have their favorite nooks in the bush. Moreover, they can tell each other vulgar stories, and one should hear them as they clean and spin cotton, or when in the evening, shut in a communal hut (1), they play, laugh, and

[591 882]

1. In the evening all young girls are shut in a communal hut or dormitory under the supervision of an old woman. The woman's duty is to prevent young men from coming in and to see that the girls do not go out and seek a boy friend's hospitality. There is a dormitory in each quarter.

chatter before going to sleep. Could it be otherwise? Since all the men have soungourou, they know that their fathers and brothers each have one, and they are not unaware that their mothers see no /160/ wrong in giving themselves to their men friends. The great crime is allowing oneself to be caught.

52| You may think I exaggerate, yet when two women, each with
83| a nursing infant in her arms, are crouched in the court by their pots in which tô (gruel) is simmering, it is very unusual for them not to be gossiping about the marital infidelities of their neighbors and sometimes even their own. I am saying nothing about the old women with turned-up chins and toothless jaws; they are experienced midwives and talk mainly about abortions.

They are all the same, and more than one mother has made me blush as she gave the breast to her last born and smiled sweetly at the rest of the brood frolicking near her. In wishing health and prosperity to a child that a woman is nursing, one sometimes makes a mistake about its sex, and without respect for one's ears nor pity for

521 831 one's eyes, the answer is almost always: "A flé bani, mousoni do, ne na d'ima, ka ké i soungourou yé. But look here, this is a girl; I will give her to you, she will be your soungourou."

521 831 576 836 And all this carelessness from the moral standpoint should not surprise us in a country where a crowd of young men greet each other even in the presence of their mothers: "I sounna ko? About the affair of your sleep? And your lovemaking at night?" "I soungourou ka kendé? How is your soungourou?"

And where young girls do not blush to say to young men: "Do me the favor that I am asking you."

"Ne na ko doumani fo i ye.

I will tell you of a sweet affair (or: conversation, shameful embraces).

"Né na ne ko doumani d'i ma.

I will give you my sweet affair (or: I give myself to you).

In short, every Bambara who awards himself the prize of virtue, avoids saying that he has respected foreign women and girls temporarily under his roof. The statement would be received with a shrug of the shoulders and a smile. He merely says: "I have respected the women and girls of the village," and he does not shout this very loud nor before everybody.

2. Concerning Adultery and Fornication

684 Adultery is a crime in the eyes of every Negro, and the guilty one caught in the act is brought before the council of elders and severely punished. I must state, however, that although adultery seems a serious offence to all, the crime does not lie in the satisfaction obtained. There has been a lack of fairness, the rights of a third party have been violated, and in this lies all the wrongdoing.

Caught in the act, red handed, the guilty party makes a friendly deal with the husband, who rarely asks him for more than 16,000 cowrie shells (from 15 to 20 francs) and the material for a sacrifice to the family boli, comprising perhaps two hens, a goat, two kola nuts, and between 5 to 800 cowrie shells for the sacrificer's bonus.

684 626 As long as he has not received the entire indemnity, the injured husband shouts, threatens, and attacks the guilty woman and man with his fists, but then the last cowrie shell is paid and all is quiet. Furthermore, should he be slow in calming down, his wife would most certainly run away and everyone would treat him as a boor. In fact, after having harshly rebuked the culprit and his accomplice and made them promise never to repeat the offense, the headman and elders go to the hut of the husband and say to him: "Your wife has promised not to default on her honor again, her seducer has paid the fine, so come, pardon them!" When the elders, the headman in the lead, put themselves out like this, they impose their will, and whoever does not say with them: "Kouma banna (1), the matter is settled, let us speak no

1. Kouma, "word," "talk"; banna, "is finished."

more of it," is no less than a cad.

684 695 If adultery is established but the seducer and his accomplice have not been caught, the case becomes complicated, for the accused will deny the crime. The matter is brought before the court of elders, and, the powerful boli come out of their sanctuaries and for a moment leave the goatskins which they use as tabernacles. The accusers swear on the fetish (kali, "to swear," boli la) (2), and on the basis of the

2. Kali boli la, " may the boli kill me if I am lying."

verbal proofs that they bring testify that there has been adultery. The accused are summoned, and if they persist in denying the charge, they are commanded to swear on the fetish to attest their innocence. Quite often they refuse, /162/ and matters drag on. The suit must finally be settled, so the husband and the accusers call on the most popular fetish with the words: "An ta boli sien (1) let us sacrifice to

1. The boli sien consists of oaths by both the accusers and the accused.

684
695

The accusers swear: "If we are accusing falsely, may the boli kill us." The accused swear: "We are not guilty, and if we are may the boli kill us."

the boli, and may he take the life of the liar." When the council of elders has decided on the boli sien, it must be carried out. If the accused is guilty he will admit it, for to call on an idol to bear witness to a lie is to doom oneself to death, to decree one's own death. For a boli has no pity for a perjurer, and legends tell of more than one case identical to that of Ananias and Sapphira.

626
688
688 Some Negroes nevertheless perjure themselves. From then on they lose all peace; one fine day they can hold out no longer, and they go to find the master of the idol, and to him they confess their crime and their transgression. In order to save their lives they make a gnénama fani (2), and when they have paid the fani-n-kolo (3),

2. Gnénama, "living thing," "one who lives"; fani, "throat cutting"; gnénama fani, "throat cutting for one's life."

3. Fani, "throat cutting," "sacrifice"; kolo, "cowrie shells," "price"; fani-n-kolo, "price of the sacrifice."

the staff of the fetish denounces the culprit (4).

4. A Negro who perjures himself in the presence of a fetish believes himself lost. Moreover, the boli taken as witness is the one most famous for its power in that circle, for instance, the Komo of Tigini,

688 Tjoïna, or Kégné, and the Nama of Misango, Kokodjan, or Guendo. The Djara of Tjikoumela is very popular in Bani country. A perjured Negro offers a gnénama fani, and the fani-n-kolo is costly. For the Komo it consists of two red roosters, two goats, a dog, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet (between 18 and 20 kilograms) and three times 8 kémé (the kémé is worth 80 cowrie shells) if the culprit is a man, or four times 8 kémé if it is a woman. For the Nama the price includes a gourd of honey, two gourds of karité butter, a red hen, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet, and 8 ba (the ba is worth 800 cowrie shells, or one franc), a kémé, and a débé (120 cowrie shells). In addition these are one to two kilograms of salt and a gourd of gnama-n-kou (malagueta pepper: amomum melegueta) for the sacrificer. For the Nia the cost is 12 ba, four chickens, two dogs, and two hens.

[804 436]

[804 436]

687 837 Adultery is frequent; it occurs daily and is the source of most of the disputes that arise. Some husbands are tolerant, however, and many are satisfied with 2 to 3 ba (between 1, 600 and 2, 400 cowrie shells, or 2 to 3 francs) and victims for a sacrifice to the family boli, such as a hen, a dog, a kid, or two kola nuts.

687 837 Like adultery, fornication is a serious offence because it violates the rights of third parties. It is less serious /163/ than adultery.

684 836 however, because the Negroes say that although the betrothed girl does not belong entirely to herself, neither does she belong entirely to her fiancé; she still retains certain rights to her own person, "à ma di ban, she has not yet been given."

684 627 When a girl becomes pregnant, she is arraigned before the family council. After a goat has been slaughtered for the family boli, she is asked the name of her partner, and if she refuses to disclose it the council of the elders is called in. She has to yield; otherwise she is tied to one of the forked sticks that support the flat terrace roof, and blows rain thick on her back.

As soon as the guilty man is named, she swears on a powerful boli (1) that she has told the truth, and the man is summoned.

1. It is almost always a Komo, a Nama, or a Kono.

Nothing is to be gained by being a perjurer; it is better to pay the fine and live. The stain on his honor is slight, and he confesses without much shame: "Tigné (that is true); né no do (it is my fault)."

The fine is between 15 and 20 francs and often between 25 and 30 francs (2), not including the sacrifice to the boli, which con-

[583] 2. The rule is that the culprit should pay the fiancé the entire bride price, or some 30 francs.

sists of two hens, two dogs, a goat, and two kola nuts. Quite often the injured fiancé has to be satisfied with the victims for the sacrifice and a small present, one to two kilos of salt, and 800 to 1,600 cowrie shells, or 1 to 2 francs. As for the child of an unmarried mother, its 847 fate is in the hands of the grandmothers, and of the father and the 848 mother, and it quite often happens that it does not cry twice in this 567 world; to use the Bambara expression: "N'a kasira, a t'na foula ké, if he has cried, he will not do it a second time." I am speaking here of a free girl, for the child of an unmarried slave girl is welcome; it is a gain for the house, and no attention is paid to the guilty man. This is easy to understand, for is there a Negro who does not abuse his slave?

626 Every seducer who has paid the fine demanded by the fiancé can walk with head held high, for he has satisfied justice, cleansed his honor, and his shield is unstained. But let him not be careless enough to go to the village of the injured fiancé, for he will be /164/ beaten hard by the young people; his exclusion often lasts for years.

010 Now, there is no reason to be surprised at the Bambara attitude toward adultery and fornication. If it can all be reduced to a violated principle of justice and nothing more, that is because they have fallen so low that they believe they were created and put in the world by God in order to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh as much as possible.

Abortion

562 Monsieur Louis Barbier wrote in the "Quinzaine" (January 16, 1906) /"Étude sur les populations Bambaras de la Vallée du Niger (A Study of the Bambara Peoples of the Niger Valley)"/: "The Bambara woman is a machine to produce children and do heavy work." In this statement he expresses, I am sure, the belief of all Europeans who have stayed among the Negroes without mingling with them or living their life. If the Bambara woman "is a machine to produce children," [163] it is a slow machine. I know families where there are seven and eight children by the same wife, but that is unusual; the average remains two or three children per woman.

853 837 It is not through frequent childbearing or because they are prolific that Bambara women lose their charms and wither. They do not, and cannot, conceive but every two or three years; they cannot bear a child more than once every three or four years, since every mother nurses her child for at least two whole years, and quite often three, and during all that time she may not conceive. Does she remain continent during that time? What is to be thought of these utterances on the part of a husband:

A ye den sóro a ti son toun.
She has had a child, she wants no more relations with me.
Né t'a don toun, ne tigouéré a la toun.
I do not know her any more, I no longer go near her.

837 Such statements simply mean that there is cheating (1) on both

[833 836]

1. Onanism is very common. Married men tell you openly: "We cannot have too many children, our wives have to go to the markets, and a pregnant woman cannot do this; an b'an dabali ("we manage to avoid having children"). There are few unmarried mothers, and yet the marriage of a virgin is unusual. They have little recourse to abortion, so there is onanism on their part. "Ka bogotigi soro min te djakouma koun don i na yala, to find a young girl who has not fornicated, you will take a walk." It is true that their lovers are often children, who cannot make them mothers.

sides, for all precautions are taken to see that the /165/ mother's breasts do not dry up to avoid the possibility of her conceiving. The soungourou, the widows and divorcées, "real cradle vultures," know how much these precautions weary a young husband, and they come running in large numbers, without shame or modesty.

And while the husband absents himself from his wife for fuller enjoyment, she on her part proves easy with the men friends who visit her or whom she visits, friends who give her the desired enjoyment without ever compromising her. I would go so far as to say that [847] she is glad to find herself deserted, for she might conceive with her husband and then it would be difficult to resort to abortion, while with her friends there is greater freedom.

And if she conceives, a pretext is quickly found for her to go 847 to her mother or whoever takes her place. Three fourths of the old women are past masters in abortions. Camphor in large doses is the basis of their brews, and they know how to use gold chloride for a modest fee; they know how to serve each and every one and safeguard their honor.

847 And is abortion such a great crime in the eyes of the Bambara? Less serious, surely, than one might imagine. It is very common, and when a woman passes, one may overhear from the lips of the Negroes, even those of children: "a y'i kono tigné, she has destroyed the fruit of her womb." There is nothing to teach Bambara children; [847] at eight and ten years they know everything! When one listens to their conversations and lends an ear to their songs, they always revolve around the vilest subjects.

3. The Birth of a Child

Before birth. -- Not only is it impossible for the Bambara to 842 accept the idea that a man could live without a wife or a woman without a husband, they likewise cannot conceive of a home without children. They desire the pleasures of fatherhood, and a couple who are healthy or, to put it better, capable of consummating the conjugal act, /166/ quickly appeal to a diviner's knowledge, however short a time they have waited to have children. They believe that sterility is the result of sorcery or an evil spell.

When the husband is impotent or afflicted with an illness 833 which prevents all marital relations, his wife readily becomes unfaith- 847 ful and commits adultery in order to avoid the shame of sterility. Moreover, in order not to have to face a winking eye that speaks volumes or a disdainful smile which reveals everything, the husband is indulgent and even approves her crime, at least for the first times. Let us admit quickly that he can do nothing about it, for if she cannot be unfaithful, the wife will abandon herself to loud cries, demand a divorce, and reject the man, who would himself leave her if she were in a similar situation. Without approving of such indulgence, one can understand it on the part of an unfortunate who needs to keep his cook and safeguard his honor before a people that scorns an impotent man and sees nothing amiss in adultery since it is a crime that can be redeemed.

[[64] If a woman who conceives is in a syphilitic condition, which 843 is often the case, the fruit of her womb seldom comes to full term

843 but is lost after the first months -- something that is inexplicable to her. To avoid this misfortune she covers herself with grigris and talismans; she wears them on her neck, on her hips, down her breasts, on her arms. One in particular I cannot silently pass over; it is the tafo, a narrow leather thong held in the skin of a monkey's hand and knotted sometimes around the wrist and sometimes above the biceps.

842 843 782 778 A sterile woman or one subject to accidents during her pregnancies appeals to the Komo, Kono, or Nama boli fetishes, but more often to the gnena, or djine, fetishes, and above all to the dasiri fetish, the genie protector of the village. Through the intermediary of the priest, the gnena-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, she offers it hens, kola nuts, and dégé, or millet flour mixed with water. She dedicates and consecrates the fruit of her womb to the dasiri and swears an oath to offer a sacrifice worthy of it if she succeeds in carrying her child to full term.

842 843 782 778 825 I should reiterate in passing that the dasiri gnéna is not, as one might suppose, constantly sitting down or astride of a /167/ leafy branch or, if you like, enclosed in a tree trunk with bark as a fitted jacket. It walks around, readily leaves the tree, the spring, or the rock which it uses as dwelling, home, or resting place; it visits its relatives and close friends, it carouses with its companions every time a drinking bout is held in honor of one of them, and when there are no parties, it takes advantage of its freedom. It is afraid of walking with its feet on the ground, so for its romantic excursions in and around the village, it straddles its mount, which is a snake, a lizard, or a donkey, but usually, as we already know, a terrible billy goat. It is this animal, especially, that the sterile woman showers with her attentions; she often goes far into the bush to fetch a handful of tender grass which is its delicacy, and every day measures of millet and maize bran are set aside for it. When she becomes a mother, she overflows with sacrifices and acts of thanksgiving, and her child receives the name of the fetish. He will be djiriba, gnénama, or gnénamaké, as I have already said in the paragraph in which I discussed the dasiri, who is the genie protector of the village and the first of the gnéna.

One last discreet word about the pregnant women: Their loincloths, the cloth rags with which they gird their hips, are held in place by means of a cord, a common string knotted below the navel, a very unsightly thing, or sometimes by means of a colored cloth, a red handkerchief, for example, folded in a triangle.

A male child, is more highly valued than a girl, and to obtain this blessing the Bambara consult sorcerers and diviners and sacrifice to the boli fetishes. The women have great confidence in amulets, and they wear hung at the waist many dirty bags which form an ugly roll under the tafe, or loincloth (the knotted cord, tafo, is worn around the hips). Some wear their "boy bringer" where it can be seen; it is a square leather bag three fingers wide which contains medicine: bits of bark and wood, and sometimes a goat's horn which the woman slips between her thighs (1). /168/

1. This horn is also often worn in order that the child may have a perfect body, or so as not to have a premature delivery. Nicolay says that these talismans or magic objects, which are capable of changing the course of events and even of nature, are made and sold by sorcerers. /Fernand Nicolay, Curiosités des lois et coutumes. Histoire des croyances, superstitions, moeurs, usages et coutumes (selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. A History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Manners, Usages and Customs (according to the Outline of the Decalogue), Paris: V. Retaux, 1901./

Birth of a child. -- In Bambara country the "demon" usually takes part in the joys and sorrows of the family. However, I have

844 not discovered the slightest satanic rite in connection with the birth of a child; not a boli is brought out of its dirty hole.

The Bambara woman gives birth to her child kneeling on a mat with her hands behind her head or propped against the wall. The oldest woman present ties the umbilical cord and cuts it with a dull razor. The infant is washed and washed again, then liberally greased with karité butter (Bassia parkii) and, if possible, with butter. The section at the navel is seldom successful, and a large proportion of the Negroes suffer from birth from umbilical hernias. The child's head is also rubbed, and it is wrapped in a white cloth. This massage, called kounkolo d'la (1), is performed with the palm of the hand and ends

1. Kounkolo, "head"; d'la, "to arrange."

with a gentle blow of the thumb on the nose to turn it up a little.

When the delivery is over, the hut is tidied, and the woman who tied the cord goes out on the doorstep and calls the father, who is sitting in the court or in an entry hut with two or three close friends: "K'i ka na san, you can come now" (2). He comes in, and the wife,

2. If the father is away, the person who watches over the hut in his absence, a relative or close friend, is called.

who is sitting on her bed, shows him the newborn child and tells him its sex. Since her chief responsibility is to watch over this little one, to feed it, and preserve its life, she hastens to cover it so as not to be blamed some day for having been careless. One glance was enough for her to note the defects of this frail body. "Manoum, is it possible! Look," she says to her husband, "look at this leg, this arm, this back, this chest. Can he live with such an infirmity?" She enumerates all the physical defects, and if she sees a pimple, a beauty spot, or a slight blueness, it must be noted, for might it not be the mark of an elder, a deceased member of the family?

8144 In the end comes a word of encouragement from the midwives
851 and the father: "A gnéna, that is good." The woman who tied /sic/ the umbilical cord runs to tell the head of the village, the dougoutigi, or /169/ gnéna-n-sonnaba, and the sotigi (if the civil and religious powers do not rest in one and the same head), and the members of his council, the gouatigi (or heads of families), that the village has one more inhabitant. To each and every one she tells the news of the newborn in a flood of words, she declares her fears or her hopes, and everyone greets her, thanks her, and makes her one of those wishes that go straight to the heart. She deserves these praises and can desire them, for she has done her duty. Besides, these are her only fees. A Bambara midwife does not get paid; she receives a present or is given a tip, so let us leave her her glory and not call her mercenary.

The child receives a name; his head is shaved. -- Two or
846 three days after her delivery before she has recovered, a Bambara woman begins to tend to her household duties. But she does not leave her hut at all; she sits on a mat, spins cotton, and smiles at her child or fondles it in her arms. And why does she not get a breath of air at least in her court? Could it be false modesty on her part? Not at all; she is proud to be a mother, but can she leave her darling for even a moment? It has no swaddling clothes or cradle; it can only cry, demand the breast, struggle and get into a position that is harmful to his frail body, and to go outdoors and visit the men friends who seem to ignore her since she became a mother (1),

> 1. Men do not enter the hut of a woman in confinement until after the tonsure and naming of the infant. The husband himself does not go in except when necessary.

she would have to leave it there alone, all by itself. Until the
[854] infant's navel dries, she cannot put the infant astride on her back, which is the only way she knows to carry him, and if she were to go out without her child, her milk would dry up and become full of substances harmful to the nursing infant.

[846] 852 553 The navel dries between the sixth and eighth day. The headman and elders are told of the event, and all the heads of families (the gouatigou) come and sit in order of age and rank at the entrance door of the hut which opens into the court of the confined woman. The religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba (2), goes alone into the hut

[793] 2. Usually it is the religious head, priest of the dasiri, who shaves the child, but there are exceptions to this rule. In some villages it is the civil head who performs the tonsure; in others this task is the prerogative of a family. Sometimes the shaving is done by the father or the grandfather. The families in which this custom is followed are not pure Bambara but are mixed with Marka blood.

and /170/ shaves the head of the infant on its mother's knees. Long [201 431] lines of women push into the inner court, clap their hands, let out shrill cries of "kouyo kouyo" as signs of joy, and give their friend a small present of millet and cotton (1).

1. The women give a handful of cotton and about a pound of millet.

When the head of the child has been shaved and well cleaned, the headman lays his hands on him to drive away evil spirits that might wish to harm his life; he gently strokes his back and chest and, spitting lightly, recites a short formula which he alone knows and can understand. Then he goes and sits among his people, and the father presents him with eleven kola nuts on a platter of braided grass. The heads of families, in order of age, place their offering of 40 to 80 cowrie shells (2) on this same platter, and the gnéna-sonnaba asks

2. The men give 40 cowrie shells. The generous ones go as high as 80.

the father or the grandfather (3) the name of the child. Instead of

> 3. It is the head of the family who names the child.

answering the question, he points to the kola nuts and the cowrie shells and says to the headman: "Let us divide the kola nuts and give to each the price of the name." Two kola nuts are set aside, and the cowrie shells are divided into two equal parts, one of which the headman takes to the mother with two kola nuts one red and one white.

The nine remaining kola nuts are divided among those present, and each family head receives at least one piece, which is the ni woro (ni, "life"; woro, "kola"). Each one also receives 4 or 5 cowrie shells (4), and the head of the family announces the name of his son and

> 4. Toua da kola: (toua, "name"; da, "to give," "to impose"; kolo, "cowrie shells").

gives the reason for his choice. Everybody shouts: "A toua dara, he has received a name, may God preserve him, may he be strong and vigorous, may he be a help and support to his parents!"

The women do not know the name that has been given, but they know it has been announced, and the woman who bound the navel takes the child from the arms of the mother and washes it three times with warm water and soap. When she has done this, three times she takes a mouthful of cool water and spits it on the nape of his neck, his back, and his thighs, saying: "May God /171/ preserve you, do not go away, stay with us, be strong and always well, may your descendants be many!"

With the child in her arms, she goes to the door of the entry hut where the father is and asks him the name. When she knows it, she goes back to the women and lays the infant on the knees of an old woman. The latter blows into his ears three times and then six times -- three times for each ear -- and shouts to him at the top of her lungs: "Kouyo kouyo, i toua dara (here she says the name),

852 Alla m'i balola, kouyo kouyo, you are called (. . .), may God make
533 you live!" Two women take up the corners of the rectangular cloth which will hold the child cradled on its mother's back, and the little one is rolled three times on an ax head if it is a boy or on the iron stick used to clean cotton if it is a girl, as if to say: "Be strong and vigorous, be a help and a support to your family!"

The child is placed astride on the back of a young girl and knotted into the rectangular piece of cloth, its mother's tafé, or loincloth. An old woman sticks a pinch of chewed kola nut on its forehead, on each side of its cranium above the ears, and on top of its head, and she knots a white cloth band a finger wide around its forehead. The girl receives a handful of millet, goes to the public square to pound it, and, with the child still on her back, prepares dégé (millet flour mixed with water). When she has prepared the gruel, she goes and offers it to the mother, who puts a pinch of it into the little one's moth, and the ceremony is finished. Not entirely, however, for a few old women run around the village with a gourd of dégé in their hands. They look for sterile women, who shut themselves in their huts and hide. Some are always caught, and they are covered with dégé; the more they cry out and the more they struggle, the more they get whitewashed.

846 After her child is shaved, a Bambara woman goes about the
852 village and attends to her work. But she does not braid her hair for
302 three months if she has given birth to a boy and for four months if she has had a girl (1), /172/ nor does she go to neighboring villages.

1. Women who braid their hair
are not of pure stock.

When this period is over, she braids her hair, covers herself with beads, with bits of amber and bracelets, dresses in her best, makes herself beautiful, and goes to present her baby, all running with butter, to the headman and elders. Her husband grants her several days' leave
[574] (1), and she immediately goes to her family.

1. About 8 to 15 days.

4. Tattooing

304 In the third or fourth month, the middle of a little girl's nose and her ear lobes (2) are pierced. This is also the time when every

2. A woman can hang from 10 to 12 rings from each ear lobe.

Bambara can be tattooed (3).

3. Some mothers wait longer before performing this operation on their infants.

The Bambara men wear a tattoo of three parallel lines that start at the temples and end under the chin. In addition to the three lines that furrow their cheeks, Bambara women wear a small horizontal line of one to two centimeters on each cheekbone (4). They make

4. This mark on the cheeks is especially common among the women of the Bani.

a star on the chin, and their foreheads are all furrowed with little knife cuts, so that from a distance one would say they are encircled by a crown.

In Bani country the women also tattoo their chests, their abdomens, and their lower abdomens, and on the biceps and forearm they wear three lines that meet in a rose shape at the joint. In the environs of Ségou this tattoo is less common, and the majority are satisfied to emphasize their breasts by encircling them with two or three rows of little dots in a semicircle, and they do this tattooing themselves.

The tattooing of the cheeks, the chest, the abdomen, and the lower abdomen among the women of Bani country is performed every

304 seven years and has a strictly religious character (5). The gnéna-

5. This ceremony takes place only once every seven years. The girls are always fairly big when their chests are tattooed.

sonnaba, surrounded by his council, the gouatigi, sacrifices to the dasiri; a hen is offered to the shades of the ancestors, the family boli are /173/ taken out of their dirty skins and sprinkled with blood, and all the village makes merry. People go in procession to the place 304 where the blacksmith tattooer is, and as long as the operation lasts 533 the women clap their hands, marking time for the blacksmith, who sings as he operates, and together they join in the chorus.

The tattoo, the chief distinctive mark of the people, is made 304 with a knife having one or two blades. The two-bladed knife cer- 413 tainly makes a tattoo which stands out more and has more detail, but it also requires more skill on the part of the operator, and, doubtless for this reason, it is relatively unusual.

At present a great many Bambara no longer wear the mark of 314 their tribe on their cheeks. The Moslems have contributed greatly to the abolition of this painful practice. Before the arrival of Europeans, under the reigns of Ahmadou and Madani, very severe punishments were inflicted on anyone who tattooed himself or had his children tattooed. One should not think, however, that tattooing was ever a [187] strict and unqualified requirement; in this connection everything is entrusted to the decision of diviners and sorcerers, of djiné, or gnéna, genii, and especially of the family boli, which are consulted and sacrificed to in order to find out whether or not it is necessary to wear the marks of the tribe. Thus it is not unusual to find that some members of a family are tattooed and others are not, and that those who are not tattooed have their children tattooed, while the tattooed refrain from doing so. This ceremony is carried out every seven years, and the head of the family may be away when the blacksmith tattooer comes by, so that the sacrifices do not take place, and the tattooing of the children is put off until seven years later. When they have

304 grown up they are allowed complete freedom as to whether they undergo the operation or not. For fear of the pain and of letting a sigh or tears escape them and becoming the laughing stock of the whole village, many children of ten to fifteen years refuse (1).

1. Male children that are not tattooed usually have their ears pierced.

Bambara tattoos are simple and not at all ugly when well done. Although it disfigures some, leaving lumps as big as a thumb on their cheeks and chest, such an accident is /174/ extremely unusual, considering the number of those tattooed. They use no unclean substances to dry their wounds and make them swell, charcoal powder being the only medicine used in tattooing.

304 174 Although this practice is being lost around Ségou, and many families no longer want it for their children, it is nevertheless not on the verge of disappearing entirely and completely. To remove a religious practice from an entire people takes years, centuries, and if a famous sorcerer came and ordered it for those who dispense with it, they would undergo it at once.

Chapter 9

Circumcision in Bambara Country

1. The Importance of Circumcision

881 304 The important act in the life of the Bambara man and woman -- both sexes are mutilated -- is unquestionably circumcision. And whence did they get this custom? Some people settle the question with one word: "It is of Mohammedan origin." I refrain from being so categorical, for the Bambara have always rejected Islam, they have

88| 304 defended their gods with spear in hand, and I can find in their circumcision nothing which resembles the religion of the Prophet in the slightest. For the Bambara, circumcision is not only the seal of the tribe, it is also a second birth, the entrance into civil and religious life.

It is the occasion for four great festivals. On the second day of the festival which corresponds to the Moslem festival of the كَبْش (sheep), those about to be circumcised, who are given the special name of soli, offer to the to-n-déou, or members of the mutual aid society, fla-n-ton, a very fine couscous called basi. To obtain it, they have had to go begging and singing from door to door (kili), whence the name soli kili basi, which is given to this festival. Before going under the knife, all the soli make a vigil of arms. The soli kili basi is followed by the soli si (1), and six days later the da woro

1. Si, "spend the night."

is held. When the circumcised boys and excised girls are healed, the drums roll again, /176/ more drinking bouts are organized, and the boloko déou don bo, the coming out of the circumcised, takes place (1).

1. From boli, "hand," "arm" (veiled terms designating the sex organs); ko, "wash"; deou, plural of de, "child," "son"; don, "day"; bo, "to come out."

88| 857 During the days between the festival of Ramadan (2) and the

2. Under Moslem domination, the Bambara had to observe the festivals of Ramadan and of the كَبْش (sheep). They have become national festivals with sacrifices to the shades of ancestors and to the good fetishes. The observances do not include a single Moslem rite . . . .

881 festival of the sheep كبش , the little soli girls, those chosen
857 for the next circumcision, go with their still unmarried older sisters
to thank the elders for the honor which has been done them. In the
[533] evening, at nightfall, they visit the families and in a nasal song
recall the glories of their ancestors. They also have the most flattering
words for those still living, and it all ends with this plea: "We are
soli and haven't a penny! On the tenth day of the next moon we must
offer you a fine "couscous" with very small grains, the basi, and we
want a good sauce. Help us in this, I beg you, we are soli without
a penny."

881 The songs of the soli remind the old men and women of their
younger days, the days of their youth, and they run to the granary,
857 search the gourds that they use as cupboards, unlace the long roll of
481 close-packed straw where the cowrie shells are piled, and the young
people leave triumphantly, rich in cowrie shells, millet, and decayed
fish. The proceeds of the quest are entrusted to the oldest of the
soli, and, on the second day of the festival of the sheep, our belles
gather, grind furiously, and provide the whole village with its ration,
basi kili, which is the name of the festival.

881 On the stroke of noon and even before, everybody is fed and is
eagerly tasting the sorghum /sic/ beer, d'lo, and the soli girls run
from one house to another to gather the leftovers from the feast. They
do it hurriedly, eagerly, and feverishly, for they are impatient to
perform their great religious, public, and solemn act, and at the
soli kili basi they are the cooks and servants of the spirits.

The latter /spirits/ stay at the outskirts of villages, invisible,
and drag the soles of their feet along the paths of yawn as they crouch
/177/ at the crossroads. The songs of happiness, the cries of joy,
the hiccups of the drinkers, and the deafening noise of the bass drums
split their eardrums, the scent of decayed fish swells their nostrils,
and no doubt, between two sighs, as they lick their lips with their
tongues, they say to themselves in a murmur which the wind carries
away: "Oh! the gluttons, they are forgetting us!"

But not at all -- they are remembered! A little soli girl smears
her face, breasts, and back with milk, ashes, also and with other
things whose names I do not know; she makes herself hideous to behold,

88] as ugly as possible, and plays the fool. Armed with a long stick -- the stick which is used to stir the gruel that is simmering on the fire (1) -- she darts out of the village, agile as a gazelle. Her companions

[415]

1. To-n-galama: a stick with a large, flattened end, used to stir gruel in the pot.

all chase her at a full run, giving many shouts; they circle around the walls four times. At every fork in the path they form a circle, dance with frenzy, and throw large handfuls of basi and smoked fish sauce to the spirits without keeping count. "Dégé dounlé, idiots," shouts the smeared girl, and all her retinue repeats with ever increasing enthusiasm: "Nalouma, big fool...." And this day, which is not very edifying, is full of delights for the little Bambara girls who are to be excised.

The little soli boys are satisfied with sacrificing to n'tomo, a good fetish which is their protector, but although they dance wearing masks with six, seven, and sometimes eight horns, they do not flagellate themselves, or at least flagellation is not required on this day. [425]

2. The Soli Si Festival, or the Vigil of the Circumcised

Here we are on the eve of the circumcision! It is black night, d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, hums and foams in the earthenware bowls, and a thin mist comes out of all the huts and envelops them. Here karité grease sputters as it melts in the pot and browns the skin of a chicken or the leg of a goat; there one hears the loud laughter of people with full stomachs, the hiccups of a glutton, the dry and decisive sound of two heavy lips releasing five great /178/ sticky fingers glued to each other by a remainder of gruel. Their foreheads decorated with beads in a kind of crown of white, red, and yellow, the colors of the rainbow, and their bodies draped in blankets, Roman style, groups of women glide silently like shadows along the alleys, carrying on their heads huge gourds full of dégé, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk. [301] 291]

[88] with honey water and milk. They go to the public square, the only ballroom known in Bambara country. The big boys, their heads freshly shaved and their bodies thoroughly greased and all shining, also arrive in a long line, and in the square there is nothing but indescribable bedlam, for all these people at once greet each other, talk and shout, and not a voice is in harmony.

[82] Young and old consult the canopy of stars, for although they are not astronomers they know that around midnight a certain star of the firmament is at such and such an angle, and they are impatient. Then the hour has come, and the male soli are crouched in the place of honor, and the young lady soli arrive in single file, their hair in disorder and their hips girded with paltry loincloths that reach from the knees up to the navel. The loincloths are gifts from the fiancé [392] of each one, and must be worn. Their colors vary, indicating the tribe and caste of each girl, so one can see that they are of some importance (1).

1. The Moslems have blue. The pure Bambara wants a yellow background with black rose shapes and lines.

[186] A Bambara woman is proud of her blood and proud of her tribe, and, wearing her loincloth in the national colors, a narrow cloth band of black stripes on a yellow background, she almost thinks she is a queen, if not a goddess, at the soli si. The girls' gait reflects this feeling: with heads high, eyes 15 paces ahead, chests stuck out like Prussians (they puff themselves up a little to bring out their charms), they admire themselves and are enraptured, each knowing that she is the focus of more than one shining eye full of desire. They advance slowly, raising a cloud of dust, and in her hands each one shakes a bag of goatskin and an iron box filled with little pebbles; her torso bends to the left and bends to the right. In the dark of the night as the little fires /179/ cast their gleams here and there, one might say that they are frail shells lost in the waves and tossed by the winds, struck by the swell and always ready to capsize.

88/ Shouting -- and that is an understatement, the young people
534 throw themselves onto their instruments, which are drums of every shape and size. Some, the bass drums, are carried on the abdomen and fastened to the waist by a bark cord; others, smaller but longer, are slid between the legs or under the arms, and tambourines, hung from the neck, swing at the level of the navel as a new kind of pendant. The old women with toothless jaws join in; they scrape two iron rods together or create syncapation by furiously beating on an inverted gourd floating in a conari full of water with a piece of wood or a pumpkin stem.

88/ Virgins, married women, widows, prostitutes (all mingling) slowly circle again and again around the orchestra behind the soli, shaking in their hands the bags of goatskin or boxes of white iron, and until morning every boy that is to be circumcised and every girl to be excised hears the glories and feats of his lineage. There is nothing very lofty about these songs containing thousands and thousands of wishes; although there is a feeling of passion in them, there is no love; beauty of the heart is lacking, and all is badly told. The men also from time to time leave the jug and mingle in the dance, but the night belongs to the women. And it belongs to the gods. If, tired of the bedlam, you leave the ball and go outside the village to breathe a little fresh air, you hear the piercing cries of the herald of the gods, you even see him in the darkness, running from one tree
[292] to another; with horns on his head and a coat decorated with feathers of hens, guinea fowl, egrets (1), etc., he looks like those story demons

1. This is the costume worn by Negroes when they dance the dance of the Komo fetish.

which grandmothers depict so well in the late evenings.

[789] And this herald of the gods, with his retinue, is performing a curious rite: he is chasing out the evil spirits and clearing a place for the favorite god of the village so as to drive away sorcery from the circumcised and the excised. /180/ In Bambara this is called kéné sélo (1) and can be translated into French as "exorcising the place."

881

1. Kéné, "public place," "court";
salo, "to stroke gently with the hand,"
"to make gestures."

One after the other the stars of the firmament go out, and only the morning star (sigi dolo) still shines, seeming to defy the dawn. Many "kouyô kouyô," shouted from a hundred throats, rise from the village, and the square is emptied. Everybody (I mean the women, for the squatting men keep on drinking and stirring the fire) rushes out of the village and forms a circle around the sacred karité tree. With his back against the tree, separated from the crowd by a white cloth, a blacksmith is kneeling rather than sitting and, razor in hand, awaiting the victims. He is calm, sure of himself, and not afraid; after all, it is quickly done. He grasps the foreskin, recites his formula as he spits, and the iron is raised, throws a gleam, and falls. A gunshot announces to the drinkers on the square that there is one more Bambara in the village, and while a woman storyteller /griotte/ applauds him, the owner of the god burns a few nayanka (2) leaves

881
304
326

2. A tree whose name in French
I do not know.

between two brands, and feverishly and eagerly goes to place the ashes on the kara, the altar dedicated to the shades of the ancestors (3), in the court of the one who was circumcised or excised.

3. This is the procedure wherever the Komo fetish is found. In the circle of Ségou a Komo is almost always the one appealed to, and if none is owned in the village, it is brought from a neighboring village for the occasion.

881 Limping, the circumcised go under the sacred trees where the dances in honor of the fetish are held, and that is where they stay

881 until they are completely healed; for it is not until evening, when the setting sun reddens the horizon and takes on its bloody hue that [292] they re-enter the village. From this day on they wear a costume (all yellow if they are Bambara) of trousers, a blouse, and on their heads a kind of handkerchief tied under the chin (4). They pass the time in

4. In some villages, instead of the yellow handkerchief the circumcised have a cap with two points. In Bani country the circumcised wear the blouse and handkerchief, or cap, and nothing more.

making mats, singing, striking together gourd disks strung on a stick, and especially in eating, "for they are being stuffed," and in sleeping. /181/

881 But in speaking of the boys, I forgot the little girls! They undress under the tree nearest to the sacred karité. Naked as a worm, 304 each one when her turn comes runs at top speed with her abdomen to the ground and throws herself into the arms of a woman, also of the blacksmith caste, who immediately cuts her. On a braided platter, [285 made of fine, pliable grass, the mother or her substitute receives the 415 bloody fragment which will be a grigri, a talisman or good-luck 189] charm for the house, and while the gunpowder speaks, the disabled girl, pretending not to be suffering at all from the loss of her clitoris, goes back to her place, and another replaces her.

881 The session ends with the last girl, and the crowd breaks out in a song of joy and triumph. The mother, the eldest sister, or a [482] serving woman wraps the excised girl in a big white cloth and carries her astride her back to the village to the hut which has been prepared for her (1). This carrying, so laughable in itself (they can walk, even

[621 346]

1. Each village is divided into quarters. The excised girls of each quarter have their hut in that quarter.

881 run, as they have demonstrated under the karité tree), is the part of whole festival which is most reminiscent of a child, and of the function of the circumcision. It is the second birth, and just as the infant appears in public for the first time on the back of her mother, so she again enters the civil and religious life on the back of her mother or of the woman who takes her place.

The excised girls do very little in their huts, and like the boys, they yawn, sleep, and eat. However, they spin a little cotton and very often sing in a low voice while they practice gracefully shaking a gourd the size of a fist, pierced with little holes and filled with small pebbles. They lead a very easy life, and one might think they were happy, but a toothless old woman who is always grumbling watches over them. This is a great nuisance! It is impossible to move, impossible to wiggle a toe; one must have permission for everything, and it is never granted gracefully. The wants of nature must be satisfied in a group and at stated hours.... When the girls go through the village, they lean, in accordance with custom, on a millet stalk at the end of which is hung the perforated gourd in which little pebbles rattle. /182/

514 293

881 533 On the way out as they go into the bush, they sing to the gnâma to protect themselves from them:

Bo n'yé, gnâma, ô gnâma,
Go away from me, gnâma, ô gnâma,
Dankoun ba la,
Of the great corner of land (1),

1. The corner of land formed by two paths that cross, the place where the gnâma dwell. /The slight discrepancy between the translations of the song given here and in Chapter 1, Section 3, is present in the original French. Ed./

881
533 Gnâma fambali, bo n'yé!
Murderer gnâma (who kills), go away from me!

And coming back they sing songs and even improvise some to greet the old and influential men of the village. Back in their huts they kneel on the mat to stretch out or sit down, and there is silence, the silence of schoolgirls which is not broken except in secret, with trembling and in a low voice.

3. The Da Woro Festival, or the Sixth Day Festival

881
796 Boys and girls have paid the tribute of blood to the tribe, five days have already elapsed, and this is the evening before the sixth. Far over there in the west the sun has disappeared behind the heavy baobab trees that border the horizon, myriads of stars twinkle in the sky, and the moon, followed by Venus (Kolo mouso, Niélé, "Niélé, wife of the moon"), traces on a blue background its silver crescent singed with a gold border.

All the paths that lead to the village are full of people walking, seeming like an endless ribbon or a snake that folds back on itself only to stretch out suddenly. Behind the band of young girls walk the women, each with a black cherub on her back that always wakes up to cry and demand the breast; and to them the girls have entrusted their little loincloths, the cloth slings with which they gird themselves for the dance. The girls walk quickly, for although they carry on
[482] their heads tall pyramids of gourds held in nets of large mesh, although they carry the fiancé's present to the queen of his heart -- salt; dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water and milk; d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer; millet and dried fish in which worms crawl; they are confortable in their clothing; /183/ nothing hinders their movements except a narrow cloth band three fingers wide which passes between the legs, is fastened at the waist in front, and waves in back in a limp and soft train. And in the night there is the rustling of dry grass trodden under foot; /there are/ long peals of laughter, light jibes that are well aimed and to the point, and witticisms, for the maiden's tongues have been loosened, and they do not lack wit.

The youths follow, dressed in blouses knotted at the abdomen like towels and trousers into which three pairs of legs and three abdomens could fit without any trouble, dragging drums and bass drums. To keep up the march and cause it to be forgotten (they often come from far away) they shout a loud "you you" and make coarse jokes, which are here addressed to the fair sex more than elsewhere. Sometimes also, between two laughs, two great silly laughs, something like the crack of a whip is heard. This sound is made by five stubby fingers as they are applied to the cheeks of dear little angels, warming them. In fact, a band of little boys and girls trot among the youths in their birthday suits, passing to the right and to the left and winding between their legs, and patience wears out and quickly comes to an end.

After the young people come the old men; they are bent double, leaning on spears, and even while talking of future projects they recall the days of the past. It is quite apparent that there are no more like them, their equal cannot be found. Into the foroko, the goatskins they slip over their arms and fasten on their shoulders, they have slipped some good handfuls of cowrie shells for the mothers of the circumcised and excised, a box of the snuff that every self-respecting stranger gives as a gift to the men of the village, and finally the kola nuts that the sacrificer will chew before spitting the remains onto the front side of the god and some that, as educated, well-bred men, they keep for close friends. They also carry the hens or roosters for the sacrifice; these are attached by the feet to the straps of the foroko and hung head down their wings flapping horribly.

The human flood arrives at the gates of the village, stops a moment under the big trees, and tidies itself. The pointed caps /184/ are put a little to one side of the head, the blouses are unfolded, and nakedness is concealed. On the women's side there is indescribable hubbub, like the sound of the distant ocean at rising tide; they polish and adorn themselves and beautify themselves. On their feet they put little chains, on their arms heavy bracelets that knock together with the sound of old iron, and on their hips the young girls at least hang belts of beads sprinkled with little bells that tinkle at the slightest movement. In their noses they put crescents of gold or copper, in

each ear ten to twelve rings of soft iron, tin, or silver, and those that they put on their fingers and toes number more than twenty.

On the braids of their hair, all running with grease, they hang bits of amber and rings of polished pottery as white as snow, and around all their necks are bead necklaces from which dangle bits of amber, grigris, and here and there, held by leather strips, pottery rings that fall back between the shoulders and in front on their bosoms. They also bind their foreheads with narrow crowns of rainbow-colored beads or diadems of coral. Such are the Negro girls in their most beautiful array.

At the homes of the circumcised and excised, the huts and courts are crowded with people, for in addition to friends and story-tellers /griots/ -- the poor troubadours of the country -- there may be in each home older married daughters who have come with their husbands, children, and parents-in-law, and the fiancé's delegation to his betrothed seem to be in every corner. This is really the festival of the tribe, and everybody is present; only the fiancés are excluded and cannot appear on this day. And how very Bambara it is! In one spot people quench their thirst with great drinks of d'lo, or millet beer, while nearby, squatted around steaming gourds, others stuff themselves with to, or gruel. The hands held out to you are running with sauce; the children who surround you are covered with leftovers from the feast and brandish under your nose bones that they gnaw clean with their bare teeth, and while they call to you Sogo ("some meat"), the satiated people next to you exclaim: "Abarka, thank you Né fara san, I am full for the moment." And everywhere there is an infernal bedlam! Old women beat furiously on inverted pumpkins in conari full of water /185/; youths beat drums, women and young girls clap their hands in rhythm, and everybody shouts the glories of the family. The families of the circumcised and excised are beside themselves, so great is their joy, and if you are one of their close friends you will be shown all the gifts received, in plain sight in the court. You are made to taste of everything, to touch and feel everything, and, just as on the day when the child is given its name, you receive, on leaving, the kola nut of life (le ni woro).

881 It is after midnight. The circumcised boys are seated in the
796 place of honor where their older brothers sat before, and they furious-
794 ly shake their gourd disks strung on sticks. Leaning on their millet stalks, the regulation sticks, the excised girls in their turn arrive at the public square, singing and shaking their pierced gourds, and the dances begin as at the soli si and continue until morning. Outside, under the sacred trees, the bell of the fetish tinkles and summons the initiates, and the Komo god roars through the mouth of its herald. At a sign from the priest the circumcised boys get up, leave the village, and go under the big trees to swear loyalty and to dedicate themselves, body and soul, to the prince of darkness (1). How can

1. The scene which I describe sometimes takes place the evening before. Sometimes, by order of a sorcerer and for a reason considered serious, the entrance into the sect of a fetish is postponed until later.

this scene be described! The circumcised boys sit under the god's favorite tree, and the crowd of initiates, grouped by villages, gather around the gourds full of d'lo that froths and bubbles. Little fires are lighted and cast a strange light into the night, and a circle of crouching human beings appears and takes shape. The master of the idol (Komo tigi); the sacrificer (mourou kala tigi); the beadle (darotigi), who rings for the sacrifice and gathers the initiates; the fetish's storytellers /griots/ (Komo djeli maou), who sing the praises of the god, fall into catalepsy at the sacrifices and then give out oracles;
[778 the Komo warada, who wear a coat covered with the feather of guinea
534] hens, hens, egrets, etc., and a long horned mask, and who carry the fetish to the place of sacrifice and blow into an iron tube that ends in two horns /186/ and is at once idol and trumpet, and draw from it frightful "fouin fouin" that freeze you with fear: in short, all the staff of the Komo appear on the scene, and there is a lascivious dance, the dance of the god, the sacred dance. Then there is the

881
796
794
rallying cry, bellowed by a hundred throats, "kou kou kou, ke ke ke"; drums roll, and drunken voices shout:

T'an ta bara ladjé.
Stop, let us go and see the gourd (of beer).
Bara ma dja an na,
When the beer has made us joyful (1),

1. Dja, "to make happy," "to please," "to be agreeable," "to make joyful."

An na youyouba yougouba.
We will dance and dance (2).

2. Yougouba, "to dance with a shaking of the whole body."

Gnâ tigi, né ka nougouni-n-ko min yé?
Master of the gnâ, what has happened to my (hen's) entrails? (3)

[782]

3. This line recalls a peculiarity of the sacrifice of the newly initiated. With one twist of the finger the sacrificer takes the entrails out of the hen, and when the young initiate wants to draw it, he is quite surprised to find that none of the viscera are in it any more.

Gnâ tigi do nougou na bo gnouan yé.
A master of the gnâ (kodit) the entrails will come out together.

Excited, or rather irritated, by the wait, the circumcised boys get up, move forward in a line, and prostrate themselves before the god's escort, the one who shakes without any rest under his cloak of feathers and brings resounding blasts from his horned tube (4), and

891
796
794

4. While the trumpet is blowing, the initiates accompany it with pipes.

grows and shrinks by raising and lowering his jointed mask. The hour of the initiation has rung, and they will be born into the religious life.

The master of the idol, the Komo tigi, places the horned iron tube on each initiates shoulder, and in a slow, solemn, hollow voice, he says these words of the initiation ceremony (5):

5. During this ceremony the initiates are prostrate.

For the Komo

Q. Moun bé i koun? What have you on your head?
A. A kala be n'koun. His handle is on my head (repeated three times). /187/
Q. I y'a yé wa? Have you seen him?
A. Né m'a yé. I have not seen him.
Q. Nin be ma fa. I y a fo ma min yé, a k'i fo! He kills a man. If you speak of him to anyone, may he kill you!
A. Ni ne y'a fo ma min yé, a k'a né fa! If I speak of him, may he kill me!
Q. I si sirila gnâma-n-fou, djala la. Your life is fastened onto the cedar with gnâma-n-fou!
A. Né si sirila à la. My life is bound to it.
Q. Ni se ma fo ma si yé, Komo k'i kisi! If you do not speak of him to anyone, may the Komo be your protector!
A. A ka né kisi! May he be my protector!
Q. I y'a fo ma min ye, i kono ka founou, a k'i fa! If you speak of if, may your abdomen swell, may he kill you!
A. A ka né fa! May he kill me!
Q. Komo k'i son ni bien (1) ta, ki koun ti, né kana bo djoli kana bo.

881
791
794

1. Bien, a woman's sexual organs. Bien, "horn"; this is a veiled term sometimes meaning a man's organs. They also say k'i bien ta, "may he tear out the organs."

May the Komo take away your heart and your organs, may he crush your head without your brains coming out, without your blood coming out.

A. O k'a ké. May it be so.

For the Nama

Q. I y'a fo ma min ye, Boli k'i so ta, k'i bien ta (1), ka doun i

/1. Same as preceding footnote 1/

djoufé ka bo i da fé. If you speak of him, may the boli cause your house and your wives to perish, may he enter you by the anus and leave you by the mouth.

A. O k'a ké! May it be so!

Q. K'i Kono gni bri, ka gni bri, gna bara.

A. O k'a ké.

Q. Ni e ma fo ma yé, k'i disi soubaou ma. K'i son sila, k'i son kénéyala! If you keep the secret may he save you from the souba, may he give you descendants and health!

"Tell me, what have you on your head? Yourlife is henceforth bound with gnâma-n-fou (bark of Bauhinia reticulata): if you talk, /188/ if you reveal our mysteries, may your abdomen swell, may the Komo kill you, may he tear out your organs, may he tear out your heart, may he break your head without your brain coming out, without blood flowing."

This ceremony in the night, in the light of the little fires that distort the shadows and lengthen them, impresses, pierces, and grips the youths, and they are heard to answer all atremble in these words that at every moment break through the nasal tone of the pipes and

881 796 794 the trumpet blasts: "I have the kala (1) on my head, my life is hence-

1. Kala, "handle of a tool," "a pestle," "an oblong object"; Komo kala, iron tube ending in two horns.

forth bound with gnâma-n-fou; if I reveal the secrets of the sect, may my abdomen swell and may the Komo kill me." Then they get up, 881 796 794 and the crowd of initiates sing hymns to the Komo at the tops of their 539 voices:

Da Woro la nana, Boloko déou da Worola.
To the festival of Da Woro he (the fetish) has come, to Da Woro of the circumcised (he has come).
Toro ma na kola gnini.
Toro (2) has not come to cause evil.

2. Toro, the name of a Komo.

Sira bo nin ye, ko dougoulé dén.
To him we give an (open) road because (he is) a child of the village.
Sira bo nin yé, ko dougoulen sira.
Give him an (open) road to know the road of the children of the village (He is one of us, let us make room for him) (3).

3. Songs of Nama:
A djigina so Nama fambali, a djigina so, tjon k'a'é.
The Nama that kills has paid us a visit, he has visited us*, let us not be

[266]

*The Nama protects against the souba, initiates of siri, reputed to be cannibals.

881
796
794
539

neglectful toward him (let us welcome
the Nama who comes to visit us).
A fiérela ka den, boli fiérela ka den.
He has blossomed to have fruits, the
boli has blossomed to have fruits
(the Nama has had a child).
Souba yo nin kéra ma lo ko yé.
Souba yo. This is done because of shame.
Souyaya kéra dabali bé an koyé.
The practice of the souba has been done
(among us), we have a means of pro-
tecting ourselves from it. /189/

881
796
794

While these hymns are being sung, the circumcised boys dance with the idol -- this is the standard expression to signify that for the first time they are executing the lascivious motions of the sacred dance.

And when they get back to their places, they are transformed, they are no longer the plain, good children who, even the day before, approached you nicely with a frank smile on their lips. They have become Bambara, and we, we are white men and strangers, masters and conquerors, and between them and us an abyss has been opened. And this abyss is opened further every day, for every time the god Komo comes out of its temple and out of the dirty foroko (goatskin) that serves as its tabernacle, they will go under the sacred trees, and will strengthen their faith and harden their hearts (1). Henceforth

1. The initiates of powerful boli's sect make a sort of "renewal of vows" a year after their admission. Those of the Komo, who are given the name of timini deou, hold a festival to break all records; there is meat and gruel to spare, and the divine liqueur, d'lo, or millet beer, is plentiful.

they will be at home in every part of the Sudan; they need not fear

the poison that kills the inquisitive and the traitors, and wherever they are asked the question, "Are you of the Komo?", they can give the password, draw two crossed lines in the sand, and then, holding the thumb, the middle finger, and fourth finger in the hand, extend the forefinger and the little finger over this mark, saying to the questioner, "I am one of you."

I have noted here the verbal text of these questions and the answers to give them.

For the Komo

Q. E b'a la Wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Ne b'a la. I am.
Q. N'i b'a la, tjoko djira anna? If you are, show us the sign.
A. Ka'l ta Drahamé.

In saying these words bend the thumb, the middle finger, and the fourth finger while extending the forefinger and the little finger. /190/

II.

Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. Tjoko djira anna wé? Show us the sign.
A. Da sigi da da la.

Place a container on the mouth of a container. While saying these words, place the feet one in front of the other, and immediately add: Djan kéné ouala djan djala. Make two parallel lines in the dust.

III.

Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. E n'i so mâou benna mi ni? And where did you and your people meet?

4: Henry--208 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

A. An benna dlaba da la, ou bi gouélé foura bosi. We met at the door of dlaba; they pick the leaves of the gouélé (false ebony) (1).

1. For the Nama.
Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Nama?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. Féré tjon k'an.
Two straws are laid in a cross of
St. Andrew and shown to you.
A. Nin yé sira gné bo la yé. This is the road that guides, lights.
Q. A perpendicular straw is laid down.
A. Nin yé wara sé n-yé. Wara ti tama sén ko. This is the foot of a wild animal*.

* The boli are often given the epithet of wara, "wild animal," meaning "strong," "powerful."

A wild animal does not walk without legs.

Sirima-n-fign: this word is the family name, the diamou of Nama. End of the questions: Dja e b'a la kot ! Dja (exclamation) you surely are /of the Nama/.

Through the whole night there are howls of wild animals, songs and lascivious dances, bellowings of trumpets freezing one with fear, and the nasal and piercing sounds of the pipes.

At dawn a warada, speaking into the horned tube, thanks those present in the name of the god Komo; a second repeats his words into a pipe, and a djélima (storyteller /griot/ of the Komo) repeats the words of the god in plainer terms to those present. And the /191/ crowd gives thanks, utters cries, makes its requests. Everyone retires exhausted, worn out, with his throat on fire and foam on his lips,

reeling on his legs -- in these festivals one must get drunk to please the god.

While all these things are happening outside, the women and little girls on the public square abandon themselves to their hearts' content. They perform none of the leaps and capers customary at ordinary festivals: shaking in their hands the goatskin bag or the white iron box full of little stones, they circle slowly, with short steps, around the orchestra, and only their buttocks move. These roll to the right and roll to the left, dip forward and quickly draw back -- a movement which is definitely not graceful. The excised girls spend the night sitting on mats covered with white cloths, between the legs of their mothers or serving women, and their heads, loosely thrown back, rest on the breasts whence they drew their life. They are wrapped in covers that have blue stripes on white background, only their heads showing, and one might say this was a display of new, shiny dolls with big black eyes, happy and all sparkling with joy. From time to time at the invitation of the dancers who sing of their grace and beauty, they shake their pierced gourds, make them rattle in their hands, and take part in the dance; then at dawn, in the morning, in a final round, they put their heels together and three times make three leaps in the air with their hands crossed on top of their heads.

And, if one believes the Negroes, this custom is not without meaning. The whitecloth on an excised girl's mat reminds the mother of one of the beautiful days of her life, the one when she gave herself to her husband in the bonds of marriage, and reminds the child hidden in her arms, wrapped in the cover like an infant in its cloths, that since she has now become a grown girl and has left childhood, she must guard her virginity. This large white cloth will testify for her on the day of her marriage as it testified for her mother, and it will be inexorable. The circle around the orchestra in short steps is the infant practicing its first steps; but now she has reached her full development, /192/ she can be sufficient to herself, and for that reason she makes these nine leaps with her hands crossed on top of her head.

As soon as the sabbath of the sons of the Komo is terminated outside, the excised girls are led back to their huts with great pomp, with music in the lead, and the festival still goes on, for a Bambara

881 festival lasts as long as there is d'lo. After a few hours of sleep, before
796 the noon meal, the excised girls come back, and around the well there is an endless babel punctuated by joyous laughter as they wash their loincloths, the cloths soiled by the dust of the night, and as they mend gourds, the dishes of this country. The pure Bambara girls, those who are not of the blacksmith caste nor of the "Marka" people of more or less mixed stock, have lost their grace and beauty and seem quite comical with their shaved heads. Just as at six to eight days
[302] after birth the head of the village, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri fetish, made motions over their heads and cut their hair, since the "hair of the womb" is not allowed to be seen in public, so at the da woro, six days after circumcision, they lose it again, since they cannot enter life with the hair of childhood; a dirty handkerchief replaces the locks of which they were so proud, they are without bead or jewel, and on their foreheads, in place of the multicolored crown,
[351] is the string with nine knots called the tafo, and it is fastened in back at the nape of the neck to the string called the djo, which is intended to protect them from sore throat, mumps, headache, and just about all illnesses.

4. The Festival of the Boloko Déou Don Bo, The Coming Out of the Circumcised and the Excised, The Real Entry into Civil and Religious Life

881 After the da woro, the festival of the sixth day, the circumcised
953 boys go back under the sacred tree outside the village, and the excised girls return to their huts. They take up again their life of "sweet idleness," and their little excursions in a group, at specified hours, to satisfy the wants of nature. They also have their days of big excursions. When the markets take place, they go to cut thorns at some 100 meters from the village. They bar the paths, set up /193/ a barricade, and ask every passer-by for a doua-mo, a share of the market. From habit, and especially from fear of the cuffings that are readily given out and of the spirits that watch over and protect the young people, everybody obeys and pays the toll. In addition to fish tails they also take in enough cowrie shells to buy a bit of meat and make themselves a treat.

881 This quiet life, this life of retreat, wearies the young boys and girls. At the end of four to five weeks they get hotheaded, they become insubordinate, and want to go home, for they are healed. Since the Negro man and woman appointed to watch them no longer insist, the council of elders meets and declares their task finished. In the afternoon when the sun, still high above the horizon, gathers all its rays to cast them furiously for one last time before going out in a purple disk, under the sacred trees and in the courts in front of the huts of the girls, the heads of the quarters make their gestures and simultaneously, without taking breath, recite their formulas and spit and then proceed to the exorcisms. "Bissimillahi (a phrase which in the mouth of a Bambara has not at all the meaning "in the name of God," but rather signifies "everything goes as desired"), our children are healed and they are going home, under the paternal roof; spirits that watch over them, spirits that protect them, let them go!"

881 184 There is a reason for this exorcism. Since the day when the blacksmith's razor, all shining, was lifted to cut, the little Negroes have been under the tutelage of fiercely jealous spirits. That is even one of the chief reasons why they are set apart and live far from the world, its ceremony and its work. No circumcised or excised child can set foot in a village hut, not even in that of their parents; their invisible protectors draw after them a whole series of evils, and wherever they are forced to enter they bring ruin and desolation (1).

1. O be n'wanso bla mala, "this causes misfortune to fall on a man."

To let one of these boys or girls enter one's home is to invite, if not death, at least sickness, bad luck, or the most dreadful poverty. To guard against such misfortunes, /194/ the Bambara must drive away these spirits, and since their assistance is considered useless, they are thanked with arm gestures and spitting.

881 When the exorcisms are over, the young brood scatters and runs everywhere into the huts; in the public square and in the alleys one hears interminable greetings and endless chatter. But the Bambara are too fond of drinking and eating, and they must celebrate the

88| healing of their children and their return home. The next morning around the wells one sees only women and young girls with naked torsos washing up in millet in plenty of water; it is to be fermented for the coming drinking bout.

88| And on that day, a little before the sun sets and when it is only
783 a bloody disk, the circumcised and excised young people bring their mats, the gourd disks strung on sticks, the pierced gourds the size of a fist and filled with small pebbles, the millet stalks carried for so long as sticks, and the dirty handkerchiefs that wrapped their heads under the sacred trees, and the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the one who sacrifices to the genii protectors of the village, sets them afire. A black, thick, acrid and loathsome smoke fouls the air, and an uncertain flame of greenish red tries in vain to rise, so choked is it by old dirt and sweat. Boys and girls dart forward and jump three times over this fire of joy. At once they are purified of all their pollution; they have left behind and abandoned the old selves, smoked them out. Agile as deer or
88| gazelles they run to their huts to masiri don ("to make themselves beautiful"). Everywhere there is an indescribable bustle! Lids of gourds, which are the Negroes' cupboards, roll on the ground, split, break, and fall to pieces, and in the midst of laughter of delirious joy there are the lamentations of an old woman who screams and grumbles. This haste and fever is the cause of delays, and the girls especially cannot yet done with arraying themselves. A piece of amber hangs too low or not low enough, the necklaces are too loose and have to be shortened, worn threads break, and beads by handfuls are lost in the dust.

At last, to the great relief of all, the cry of joy "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê!" rings out from the four corners of the village. Preceded
533 by the /195/ chorus of singers (a group of women and girls who clap their hands and sing a most barbaric tune in falsetto, without ever being in harmony), the drums slowly head toward the great trees of the square that is the ballroom. In all the alleys that intersect the village and make it a labyrinth, a crowd of women, men, and children rush, jostle elbows, and shout, and in a moment the square is full.

881
[887] Moment by moment the old women come closer and the word "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê" resounds louder and louder. But now they come out, and their bodies move as if they were made of rings, so closely do they imitate a worm surprised by a ray of sunshine who is hastily returning to its nest in the ground. With their pointed chins, wrinkled skins, and toothless jaws, they look like real savages as they furiously scrape two iron rods; on their bald heads they wear dirty towels, the filthy appurtenances of sorceresses, wound without skill or taste. With spear in hand the young citizens appear in full trousers; they wear caps with double points or loud-colored turbans with long fringes, and their bodies disappear under loose blouses still all perfumed with the musty smell of the bottom of a storage bin, all stiff and shiny under a paste of starch. They leap and shout, they brandish their arms, assume the look of warriors, and especially assume such a look of conceit that one's laughter is unloosed.

[415] After the boys come the girls, fanning their "alms purses" all decorated with cowrie shells; these are platters braided of fine, pliable grass, doubtless those onto which the bloody remnants were placed on the morning of the soli si, or arms' vigil. They come forward stiffly,
[301] and glide rather than walk over the ground, for their feet are weighed down by small chains and iron rings, and can hardly be lifted. Gold or copper crescents pull down the septum of their noses, a handful of striped periwinkle shells hangs from the lobe of each ear, several coral necklaces encircle their heads, and everywhere, chiefly around their necks, are pieces of amber interspersed by grigris and beads of
881 every size and shade. Bambara of the noumou, or blacksmith caste,
302 the Marka turned Bambara, and every Bambara girl /196/ of more or less mixed stock whose head was not shaved at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day, has their hair braided, and on top of the crest which ends in two small braids along each ear, there is an odd little bundle, a handful of hair. This is in memory of the eighth day after the girl's birth, the day when she was given her name, and what she is wearing is nothing less than what the Bambara call "the hair of the womb" (1). If this has been lost, as is usually the case, the

881
302

1. Newborn infants have their heads shaved six to eight days after birth; they cannot go out of their homes before being shorn of the hair of the womb (ou ba, "their mothers"; kono, "womb"; si, hair).

881
292 mother provides some of hers. The dress-up outfit of our excised girls is a regular harness; two or three loincloths in layers encircle their waists, and of the actual costume, the band of cloth which shakes behind in limp and loose trains, the big pompom is all that shows. At least one can look at them and see them, as for once pretty white blouses clothe them; the long cloth slings required in the dances are thrown over their shoulders and brought to the front and create quite a pretty effect. In Bani country the girls wear a wide belt of cowrie shells around the hips and over the loincloths, and on each side two bundles of cowrie shells hang from leather thongs that pass over the shoulders and are crossed on the chest. This dousou ko (2), as it is

881
301
583

2. Dousou, "soul," "heart," "seat of love"; ko, "affair," "pledge of love."

called, is the remaining portion of the bride price given by the fiancé, and is worth 5,000 to 6,000 cowrie shells.

881 Around the drums that rage in the square, behind the old women who scrape their pieces of scrap iron, and behind the female story-tellers /griottes/ who sing of their charms, their strength and their beauty, the circumcised boys and excised girls circle for a few moments and go and sit on the mats that have been prepared for them.

Kola nuts are distributed to the new citizens; gourds of dége, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk, are placed at the feet of the girls, queens of the day, and the head of the village makes the speech that is required at the beginning of every festival. His herald, standing beside him, repeats it word by word, sentence by

881 sentence, for the headman only talks in a low voice, as is in good taste. /197/ The speech is short; he calls by name each circumcised boy and excised girl and reminds everybody that among them circumcision is as old as the world, that is to say, as old as the Bambara people. "Yes," he exclaims, "our circumcised children are on the path of their fathers; they are Bambara. Youths, young girls, men and women, old men and old women, our circumcised ones can henceforth take part in palavers, sit with their elder brothers around the gourds of d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, and take part in our games, our merry-making, and our rites. May everyone know it and no one forget, or ever treat them as if they were uncircumcised (1) -- that is the

[578]

1. To call someone blakoro ("uncircumcised") is the insult of insults.

deepest insult! Everyone will know how to avenge an insult to his child, and I will know how to avenge an insult to mine." He ends by saying: "Truce to disputes; let us eat, drink, dance, and enjoy ourselves, and /leave/ serious matters (2) /until/ after the festival."

2. All disputes, all litigation, everything that disunites.

From then on, d'lo flows in streams and throats are cleansed. Everybody, young and old, men and women, dances in honor of the young "citizens," and as long as the sparkling, foaming liquor lasts, there are songs, dances, cries and shouts without end on the public square, day and night. And when the beer reaches its end, each circumcised boy and excised girl, in order of age, stretches his or her muscles before the public, accompanied by father, mother, and all his family and that of his fiancée or her finacé. This is the climax of the festival. At this point the cries and shouts redouble, and the drinkers, jug in hand, foam on their lips, gazing into space and wavering on their legs, place beads, cowrie shells, and a kola nut in the large pockets of the blouses of the circumcised youths and

881
43

881 onto the platters of the excised girls. With the last kola nut all leap-
431 ing stops, and the festival ends. Slowly the crowd withdraws and goes home, for it has only too much need of a little rest.

881 On the days following this "coming out of the circumcised"
574 (the name given to this occasion by the Bambara), the youths and maids run around the country dressed up, and go to thank those who were at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day. Boys and girls, in two groups, under the /198/ direction of their old woman guardian, walk along the paths one after another, Indian file. At the head of the column is the massa, or queen; the massa ma Kono, her deputy, comes next, and she is followed by the massa ma Kono ségére, who again is the deputy of the one in front of her. All the others are girls that are healed, and the last, the youngest of all, is called koulé. The boys march in the same order and bear the same titles. This way of thanking people is very Bambara; although they insist on showing themselves so that people will know that they are circumcised,
[431] they want especially that alms be given them, and they go to ask a gift and hold out both hands. The Bambara people are a beggar people!

Chapter 10

Bambara Marriage

584 Little Bambara girls are betrothed when they are very young, generally between the ages of four to ten, and girls of twelve, fourteen, and sixteen years who still await a suitor are very unusual. Yet age matters little, for there are three stages in marriage: the proposal, the betrothal, and the wedding, and whoever wants to take a wife, whether he is young, mature, or an old man, married, widower, or unmarried, must obey this law.

584

1. The Marriage Proposal (1)

1. The procedures described here apply to the marriage of a young girl. For widows or divorcées who remarry, there are consultations of diviners, sacrifices to the evil fetishes, etc., but the betrothal and wedding ceremonies are performed with a minimum of show.

582 581 The Bambara are not unmoved by the beauty of a woman's form; they can distinguish a well-formed body from a malformed one, a pretty woman from an ugly one, and they find a coppery skin more attractive than one of ebony black. Similarly, a face pitted by smallpox or a bosom covered with scars displeases them, and a man talks to you about his fiancée or his wife, he is quite proud to be able to say: "sien si t'a la, she has a body without blemish," therefore she is beautiful. When it comes to marriage, however, he does not look too closely! He readily keeps silent about his tastes and seldom consults his heart, for a wife to him is primarily a source of pleasure and profit. /200/

581 What he sees in a woman above all is a being of a different sex than he, and if she is industrious, cooks well, and is good at business, he will know how to close his eyes to her defects in order to keep her and allow her to be an important person in his home who must be reckoned with.

584 When a Negro who wants a wife finds an unbetrothed girl, he quickly confides his secret, his fears and hopes, to his close friend, a man of mature age who enjoys some respect in the country (1). The

544

1. Some people have thought that the "storytellers /griots/" act as intermediaries in asking the hand of a child. Nothing is more

564 erroneous, for the Bambara despises this breed and would never entrust one with such a delicate mission. The Bambara dreads the storyteller in his private festivals. How many times they say as they invite us: "We came ourselves to invite you so that the news may not reach the ears of the storytellers." The to-n-tigi, head of the association of the fla-n-to, plays no important role in the marriage of a to-n-dé, or member. The to-n-déou, members of the association of the fla-n-to, are invited and enjoy themselves at the wedding of a fellow te-n-de, and that is all. Mr. Barbier Louis /sic/ makes a mistake; see page 527, Dec. 16, 1907, of the review La Quinzaine.

574 latter receives four kola nuts wrapped in green leaves and tied again and again so that they will not wither, and, spear in hand and his inseparable goatskin, or foroko, well fastened to his shoulder, he starts on his way, proud to be assigned such a pleasant mission and happy and pleased to be the fourouboloma tigi, guardian of the wedding gifts (2).

2. Fourouboloma, "engagement gift"; tigi, "master."

584 At the end of his journey, on the public square, he extends a
887 very friendly greeting to the old men who there devote themselves to
576 laziness in the shade of a great tree with the apathy of lizards; he gives them all generously of the snuff that every stranger must offer, and if he has no friend or acquaintance in the village, he chooses from among them a man of good will who will introduce him to the family and smooth the way for him. When this man is found, he goes

584 there without further delay and makes his request, which the man who
887 introduced him repeats word by word and sentence by sentence.

584 The father of the girl ponders a moment, and if the suit pleases him he answers in a word: "A gnéna, that's good." The little package of four kola nuts is then offered him, he summons his daughter and her mother, and the fourouboloma tigi again explains the reason for his /201/ coming. Everything is settled with the following words: "Give my greetings to the one who sent you and all his family, tell him that I am happy he is asking for my daughter. A diara an ye hali (1), it is a great joy for us, but this, you know, needs reflection! I

1. A, "that"; diara, "is happy"; an ye, "for us"; hali, "much."

will speak to my friends soon, and in a few days you will know my decision." The emissary has not been refused and, satisfied with himself and the good prospects of the matter, he leaves to carry to the suitor the words of the girl's father, which should open the door of hope to his heart.

2. The Diviners and Fetishes Accept or Reject the Suitor

584 To marry their daughter and marry her well is a nightmare to
583 every father and mother, and both remain anxious when a suitor presents himself. The Bambara know anguish! A daughter may not be beautiful; often she is even ugly, with a large navel, an umbilical hernia, or blood blister due to the clumsiness of the midwife, but her father lives in her large, white eyes marked with a black spot that is full of life and shining, in her broadly slit mouth and puffy lips; he recognizes his own, and his whole inner being cries to him: "This is your daughter, this is your blood."

Frightful thoughts come to torment him: "If the suitor should have the character of a villain and the brutality of a beast, will he not beat my child mercilessly? Might he have one of those shameful diseases that people hide and do not name, so that my daughter will commit adultery in order to avoid the embarrassment of being

584 sterile? And if he should be one of those sensualists so numerous
593 among us, and, bored after having enjoyed her, should drive her away and reject her?" He trembles and wants to know what the future holds both for him and for her, and goes to consult the diviners.

584 Two and often three diviners are consulted. If they all agree in
593 testifying that the suitor is of good character, that divorce is not to
787 be feared, and that the child will become the mother of healthy, strong, and vigorous children who will perpetuate her people and her blood, he finds joy again. He tells the verdict to both his wife and his daughter, he imparts his decision to the head of the village and the council of elders, and /202/ without any delay, freed as he is from all fear, he notifies the suitor that the doors of his home are open to him.

574 At this announcement the suitor chooses a fat hen from his hen
787 house, takes one or two kola nuts from his store, and again the fourouboloma tigi, the guardian of the wedding gifts, starts on his way, for this time he must find out whether the family boli, and sometimes the shades of its ancestors, are opposed to the proposed union (1).

1. If some occurrence later causes the engagement to be broken, or if there is a marriage followed by divorce, it does not enter his mind that the diviners were mistaken. The whole responsibility falls on the head of an enemy, who through hatred or jealousy has found a way to disrupt everything. It is almost always someone unknown, which is fortunate.

584 The father of the little girl takes down his goatskin, or often the
787 skin of a wild animal, a frightful, dirty foroko, the tabernacle of the
778 family boli; he sprinkles them with the blood of the hen and then spits a piece of chewed kola nut on them. If he does not have family boli -- an unusual situation -- he sacrifices to his ancestors on the doorsill of the entry hut, or b'lon, and on the kârâ, if he owns one.

584 787 778 A kârâ is an earthern bas-relief inside the b'lon, or entry hut, which very crudely depicts a woman and a man and is used as an altar.

When the sacrifice is accepted -- that is, if the feathered biped has the fortunate idea of not dying with its wings spread and its breast on the ground, and if the pieces of kola nut, cut in two, which are thrown on the boli or the kârâ, fall with the rounded part on the ground and the pulp on top (2) -- there is an unequivocal "yes" on

2. A procedure which is repeated up to three times in case of failure.

the part of the family, and all hearts rejoice. As to the fourouboloma tigi, he delightedly sucks his piece of kola nut, he savors his piece of the hen, and the scene of the sacrifice is far from his memory. Yet he trembled when, crouched before his boli or the kârâ, altar of his ancestors, the father-in-law cut the throat of the victim and threw down the kola nut, saying in a solemn and cavernous voice: "We have consulted the diviners, and they all agree in praising the suitor; if they are to be believed, he is worthy of our daughter. But you, what do you think of this union? If it is to be /203/ happy, if divorce is not to be feared, if it is to be fertile, accept my sacrifice, I pray you. In that case, grant them wealth, long life, many children, and peace. This hen and the kolas are indeed for the sacrifice, and it is a true sacrifice which the suitor offers you through my mediation."

This manner of accepting or rejecting a suitor is most ingenious! Since everything is referred to the decision of the diviners, the boli, and the shades of ancestors, any dispute on the part of a rejected man is impossible, no quarrel arises between the two families, and when a more fortunate suitor obtains the little girl's hand, he need not fear the hate, rancor, or vengeance of his predecessor for he has nothing to do with the latter's misfortune.

3. The Betrothal

584 583 I have often heard it said that a Bambara marriage is nothing less than a sale and a purchase: the woman goes to the highest bidder. I cannot share such an opinion. The suitor gives a bride price, I know, but this bride price is a present to the fiancée, and its entire value is returned to him. When the fiancée's father receives it, he treats himself to trousers, a cap with three points, a new blouse, a few jugs of d'lo, or millet beer, and many kola nuts; but when the wedding comes, it is the father who provides his child with loincloths, gourds, pottery, in fact her whole trousseau, and however slight his vanity -- and what Bambara is not vain! -- he will spend the bride price and even more.

When the suitor has been able to gather two to three kilograms of salt, a few bits of cloth for the little girl and her mother, and a portion of the bride price (1), which varies between 25 and 30 francs,

[436]

1. The bride price is set at ba mougan ni tan, about 24, 000 cowrie shells. Each ba equals 10 kémé. The kémé is worth 80 cowrie shells, the ba 800 cowrie shells. In ordinary times a 5-franc piece is exchanged for ba dourou ni kémé dourou, or 4, 400 cowrie shells. The value of the cowries is subject to rise and fall, so that the 5-franc piece is sometimes worth 4, 400 cowrie shells; at other times the cowries drop and the 5-franc piece is worth ba woro ni kémé dourou, or 6 ba and 5 kémé, or ba wolonoula, 7 ba.

he pays his respects to the family through his intermediary, the fouroubolona tigi, or guardian of the wedding gifts. The latter goes to the father-in-law, escorted /204/ by a few young girls who carry the fouroufen, or bride price, the gifts of cloth and salt, and a few jugs

583 of d'lo, or millet beer. The head of the village and his council,
584 friends, and the to-n-déou, or members of the association of the
fla-n-to (1), go at once to pay their respects to the happy father and

561
575

1. The association of the fla-n-to, with a to-n-tigi at its head, is made up of several groups of to-n-déou, or members of the association. Every group corresponds to a circumcision. /sic/ When many are circumcised at the same time, they form a group, but if there are only one, two, or three, they join the group of those circumcised at the preceding occasion. The to-n-dé invites to his betrothal and his wedding the members of his group, who were circumcised with him, and the members of the older groups. As to the younger groups, he does not invite them. The women also form an association of fla-n-to similar to that of the men but separate from it. The woman who is at the head of the association, usually the oldest in the village, is called to-n-tigi, or massa fama, queen, and the to-n-dé mouso (the to-n-dé women) call her m'ba, mother. They are summoned only to the wedding.

583 to tell the girl that her betrothal is being celebrated and cannot hence-
584 forth be broken without a grave and important reason. Soon the b'lon of /sic/ the entry hut and the inner court are full of crouching men who drink d'lo, or millet beer, and soon ramble in their talk. And

583 the fiancée has time to reflect and to open her heart to love, for her
584 wedding will not take place until one, two, or often three years after excision; once this has been performed she will be qualified to be a mother.

584 From the time of the engagement the two families draw together,
594 establish friendly relations, and visit each other. After the girl has grown up, during the year or two that elapse between the excision and the wedding, she spends two weeks to a month each year with her parents-in-law. One might say that in Bani country, this is the general custom (2). When the young men sent to bring her arrives,

> 2. In the environs of Ségou this custom is less comon. Often the two families come to an agreement, and on the appointed day the fiancée goes to the home of her fiancé, accompanied by a young man appointed by the council of elders. After the last festival of the circumcision (baloko déou don bo, "the coming out of the circumcised"), some, even many villages hold a festival for the fiancée. She goes to the home of her fiancé all loaded with beads and necklaces and escorted by all the young girls of the village. The fiancé bears all the cost of this festival, called mousodjira, "to show the wife." All the youths of the village and of neighboring villages give 80 to 160 cowrie shells to help the fiancé cover the expenses.

[43]

she /205/ hides in the hut of friends, and the little band runs right and left looking for her. They soon find her, members of her family--

584 her mother, step-mothers, and sisters -- join them, and the little
574 procession goes to the religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri, genie protector of the village, who gives some advice to the child and sets the day of her return. On leaving the village, the girl stops and refuses to go on; the youths take hold of her and carry her in their arms, and she abandons herself to cries and shouts that must not cease before she reaches the edge of the fields that surround the village.

584 Although the bride price is set, it is more difficult to determine
431 the value of the fiancé's presents of millet, hens, salt, kola, and d'lo, or millet beer. The size of these presents, given gratuitously over four, five, or six years and often more, depends largely on the fortune of each man and the prestige of the fiancée's family. At harvest time he supplies one or two baskets of millet /each/ weighing 20 to 40 kilograms; at the great annual sacrifice offered to the family boli he provides a hen, salt, kola nuts, and dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water. From time to time he gives his prospective father-in-law some well-filled jugs of d'lo containing at least 20 to 30 liters /each/, and if there is a festival at his home, he is careful not to forget the latter. He shows his generosity at the festival on the occasion of his fiancée's excision (1); at the da woro, or festival of

1. A Bambara man is not present at the festival which takes place at the excision of his fiancée.

the sixth day, he shows himself to be generous, and the guardian of the wedding gifts takes her the required present, a loincloth in black stripes on a yellow background, four to five pounds /the French livre equals one half a kilogram, a little more than a pound avoirdupois/ of butter, two to three kilograms of salt, 20 to 30 liters of d'lo, or millet beer, an equal amount of dégé, or flour mixed with honey water, and finally some decorative ornaments -- a bead necklace, a piece of amber, a bracelet. These last gifts are in no way required; they are given purely out of amiable courtesy.

584 One little fact without importance, remains to be noted. From
606 the time of the engagement, the fiancée may not eat in the presence

of her father-in-law nor linger with him in endless conversations, especially when no witnesses are present, and the fiancé is subject to the same rules with regard to his mother-in-law. /206/

In a word, they may no longer even look at each other! If the fiancé dies before the wedding, it is in good taste for the girl to become the fiancée of a younger brother, but if there is no brother she regains her liberty and keeps her bride price. If the fiancée dies, the family usually keeps the bride price they have received; custom permits the fiancé to demand the return of half the bride price but, in the eyes of everyone, to do so would indicate a lack of tact and delicacy. But if for one reason or another the engagement is broken, the bride price and small presents are returned to the fiancé in their entirety.

4. The Wedding of a Young Bambara Girl

The fiancé asks for the girl (1). -- The fourou fen (the bride price and small presents) have been paid, the fiancée is a grown young lady who has long been excised, and only rags remain of the beautiful yellow loincloth with black stripes which was received at the da woro, or festival that follows the sixth day after the circumcision. A kouara -- she has reached her full development and henceforth can only decline in grace and beauty, and her fiancé desires her. The

1. It happens sometimes that the family cannot refuse the suitor's request for the girl, although she does not have all her trousseau. In that case the wedding festival is put off, but she is led to her husband, and a little private celebration takes place on that day. When she has her trousseau she goes back to her family, and the big festival is held.

[584] [585] fourouboloma tigi, or guardian of the wedding gifts, puts on his festive clothes and takes 5 kémé, or 400 cowrie shells, to the father-in-law. The gesture is understood by everyone and means: "When will the wedding be?" A Negro has only one love: his interests; only one affect of affection: himself. In his egotism he thinks only of himself and of receiving cowrie shells; his heart is not unduly stirred. He thinks of his fields, his business, and his stomach. The members of the family, from the oldest to the youngest, have only these words on their lips: "How she handles the hoe! What a good tongue for praising merchandise and selling it; how well she cooks!" And it all stops there, for no one pays heed to her feelings. In vain will she cry that she detests her fiancé, that she does not love him at all, never could love him, and that she prefers another; in vain will she flee the /207/ paternal roof and take refuge with a sympathetic relative; she must obey! Her father and mother have received the oracle of the diviners; in accepting the sacrifice, the family boli have accepted the suitor, and they /the family/ cannot oppose the orders of their gods or, if one prefers the other term, their family fetishes (1).

[836]

1. Custom decrees that the girl spend one night with her fiancé 10 or 15 days before the wedding. Some families dispense with this practice. The whole procedure is carried out in privacy: the girl arrives at night, brought by a member of her family, and withdraws at dawn. The two following expressions denote this procedure: Ou tara di à tjéma ("they have gone to give her to her husband").

Moreover, I must admit that there are very few Bambara women who openly show their antipathy. They cannot resist paternal authority and freely give themselves to the man to whom they have been betrothed; "an ka lada do, it is our custom," they say, and the idea does not occur to them that there could be another.

585 Departure of the bride. Exorcism of her hut by the boli of the village. Her entrance into the village. The first night. -- It is night, the hour when families crouch in a circle around the gourds of to, or millet gruel, stuff themselves with food, and noisily suck their fingers. Why is it, then, that this evening the women hurry in such numbers to the public square with gourds on their heads? At every turning of the streets there are people who are cleaning their long flintlocks, and in the b'lon, or entry huts, there is the deafening noise of drums as the skins are stretched and they are tuned. And the cries that fill the village crack your ears and jar your nerves. What is it then? A young woman, a fiancée, who is struggling in the arms of two husky fellows and shrieking -- for appearances, since as soon as she is outside the walls her cries cease and she places on her head the long cloth (a present from her husband) from which she can make herself three loincloths and in very lively fashion follows the women and girls who are carrying her trousseau. The band of young men, with drums, trumpets, and guns, hurries after her, and there are songs of joy and hand clappings, and from time to time the long-drawn-out cry, "kouyo, kouyo," uttered by an old woman, tears the peace and silence of the night. /208/

585 789 778 And while the bride, in short steps, continues her triumphal march, a strange scene takes place in the village where she is going. The chief boli of the village has left its putrid hiding place, and while women, children, and the uninitiated, huddled in their huts, tremble at each roar given forth by its herald, it runs about the alleys in the hands of its initiates (1). This is not all; it goes into the husband's

1. Ou tara djira à tjéma k'a d'a ma: "They have gone to show her to her husband in order to give her to him." The real expression is as follows: A wélé la k'a se-n-don, A se-n-donna; "Her husband has summoned her in order to sleep with her. She has slept with her husband." The answer is: Fourou kera: "They got married."

583 court and enters the hut of the bride. At that instant the boli déou, 779 sons of the boli, sing the sacred hymn and abandon themselves to 778 their dances, and the god itself lies on the white cloth spread on the bed, on the mat where the poor girl soon will rest. Like every rite of this kind, this ceremony is called kéné salo, "to exorcise the place (2)," and its purpose is to drive out the harmful spirits who

> 2. Kéné, "surface," "plane," "floor," "court"; salo, "stroke gently with the hand"; this term denotes a movement of the hands that the sorcerers use when they are treating an invalid, "to make /ritual/ gestures."

might have evil intentions against the woman and her husband. For the husband it is also a means of publicly bearing witness to his faith in the boli and his love and his attachment for it, in short, a means of obtaining its favor and attaining a happy and fertile marriage.

585 The young woman and her retinue continue to walk very slowly along the winding paths, and in the distance, here and there, a gunshot, a clapping of hands, and the famous cry of "kouyo kouyo" can be heard; the cry comes near and again draws away, depending on the bends of the path, only to draw near again with a stronger burst. Finally they arrive at the edge of the fields, 200 to 300 meters at most from the village. The young men run to place themselves at the head of the procession, the bearers of the trousseau pass to the rear, the drums roll, and the horns of the band roar loudly, for this is the dance. But what a dance! The women, bent double, move [535] their torsos back and forth in a manner which might best be compared with that of a worm that draws back and slowly stretches out; they glide over the ground without lifting /209/ their feet, leaving on the sand behind them a long trail as if a boa had passed by. With discouraging slowness, they go like this to the gate of the village, taking an hour, and often two, to cover these few hundred meters.

Covered with sweat and white with dust, the procession moves along the walls; here it is at the gate, firing guns, clapping hands,

[585] shouting songs that partly drown out the rolling of the drums and the roaring of the horns of the band. The boli gives a last roar, and its priest carries it to its foul temple where the air breathed is warmed by the steam of hot blood and never cooled. The huts open their doors, and a stream of women, children, and young girls rush along the alleys and mingle their voices with those that are arriving. The [535] crowd of women divides into several groups, and again they bend double in unimaginable contorsions that a pen cannot describe; all parts of their bodies shake and move, as in a gentle wave that goes forward and folds back on itself. They glide over the ground raising a cloud of dust and, preceded by drums and in a blast of guns, they arrive thus slowly in the couple's inner court. Here everybody flinds food ready. The middle of the court is full of huge gourds of to, or gruel, dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water, and jugs full of d'lo, or millet beer, and while the newlyweds are enjoying their first love-making, drinking, eating, dancing, and shouting is going on near them. For I forgot to say that the young bride will long since have left her frenzied, howling mob. As soon as the boli has been put away, the women come to lead her to her dwelling (1). Before

[595 592]

1. Every Bambara woman has her own hut separate from her husband's. A Bambara man who has only one wife sleeps in his wife's hut; if he has several, on the contrary, the woman who is summoned goes to lie in that of her husband. Some rich men provide each wife with a hut, an inner court, and a b'lon, or entry hut. In that case the first wife does not have a hut separate from that of her husband, and the husband goes to spend his nights with one or another as he chooses.

taking her into the marital sanctuary, where her husband is already

585 awaiting her, they undo her young girl's hair; they take off the cloth ribbon three /210/ fingers wide which is fastened in front at her waist and passes between the legs to fall behind in a loose, soft train; they unknot her belt of beads and bells; they help her to take her bath and lay her on the couch, rolled in a loincloth (1).

1. This ceremony terminating the wearing of a young girl's attire is often carried out in the village before leaving, especially if the village to which the bride is going is far away and will not be reached until late at night.

Suddenly all the guns are fired and many loud "kouyo kouyo" ring out, overpowering the songs, the noise of the drums, and that of feet beating on the ground in rhythm, and old women with wrinkled, parchment-like skin rush into the hut with warm water for ablutions(2).

2. This whole scene takes place in the morning, a few moments before sunrise.

Dressed in his new blouse, the groom leaves the dwelling of his bride, greets the strangers who fill his court, and sits down on the mat with the fourouboloma tigi and his close friends. The bride also quickly appears and walks across the court. She is dressed in [291] the loincloth of married women which is held at the waist by a thin cord while graceful red and white pompons, often marked with yellow and green lines, hang discreetly at the sides along her thighs. She walks with timid eyes, her head bowed, and a band of women story-tellers /griottes/ (singers) follow her with their songs of love; they tell of the delicacy of her skin, the elegance of her form, the breadth of her torso, the firmness of her breasts. There is still more -- and at the very least one would blush; the old women in back shake a large, bloody white cloth (3), which bears witness to her virginity

585

3. Even those who have known their husbands before this day are honored in this fashion, for the family will have kept this cloth faithfully, and if there is occasion to unfold it, they are very proud.

before all. In a word, everybody praises the bride for having been [81] able to remain a virgin, but they praise her in Bambara, which means they do so in coarse terms, and in order to emphasize her virtue they present her with a bouquet of roses rolled in filth.

When the bride leaves the court, her maids of honor come to fetch her, and while the men stay and get drunk and the women continue to clap their hands, to sing at the top /211/ of their lungs, and to dance to the sound of the drums, trumpets, and guitars, she herself goes into the hut of friends to end the first night of her wedding in sleep. She may not go out for eight days; she takes her meals in the hut and spends her days sitting on a mat with a white veil on her head, spinning cotton in the company of her maids of honor (1).

[178 574]

1. Many have freed themselves from this custom. Those who submit to it -- and they are in the majority -- can see their families again after these eight days of imprisonment and stay with them for two weeks. The bride's trip to her family at this time is called bina kounna sago. A few weeks later she again spends four days -- sou nani yé -- with her parents, and a little later she stays with them for one night, sou kélen si.

The groom stays in his hut for the whole day following the first night, and just about everybody, men and women, come to pay him

585 their respects. It is chiefly the d'lo, or millet beer, that attracts them, but under these circumstances the Bambara forget that they are beggars always holding out their hands. Although the visitors eat, drink, and get drunk, they pay for at least a part of what they consume.

585 431 Through the intermediary of the fourouboloma tigi, each guest and visitor, man or woman, gives the couple a fourouboloma fara, or wedding present, in kind or in money. They know, after all, that this is a means -- and the best-- by which they can empty a jug of d'lo, then a second, and finally several.

585 I know nothing more taxing than a Bambara wedding, which lasts two, three days, and often eight, if the husband is rich or wants to appear so. As long as the festivities last, the bride and groom are in their respective huts, surrounded by people who are sweating from having eaten or drunk too much, in an atmosphere warmed by foul breaths, and where there is never any fresh air. They do not have a minute, not an instant, of peace, and they cannot even attend to [514] the wants of nature without being escorted by a numerous band. After each meal there is in their courts a deafening noise of drums, horns, and songs shouted by voices never in harmony, and their ears hear nothing but these sentences, which must be a torture to them in the long run: "May your marriage be happy, may hands and feet spring from it (may you have many children), may God preserve your /212/ health, may He grant you a long and vigorous old age. Thank you, thank you, you have received us well, you have not been sparing of the d'lo, I am full (nzé dé fara -- or again -- né fara déren) (1)."

1. On the day of her wedding, a young woman talks only with the many women who have come to keep her company and with her maids of honor. When the time has come when she can talk, she is offered a hen.

5. Exhibition of the Bride's Trousseau on the Evening of the First Day

585

Although the sun is high above the horizon, it is already without strength and life, and at the door of the entry hut to the couple's dwelling, drums and trumpetings rage and give honor to the young woman who is seated in the midst of them on a tiny stool. She allows people to admire her adornment, her beads and her jewels, her rings of copper and tin and sometimes also of gold and silver; she allows them to rave about the shoes with soles three fingers thick, which are a gift of the groom, and about her artistic, finely braided coiffure, [302] a mountain of hair forming a crest across her head which ends in two thin locks in front of and behind each ear -- cavalryman's helmet with a broken chin strap, one might say, all ebony and thrown on its side. But she has given her heart and her promise, and she covers her face with the platter of braided grass that she holds in her right hand.

[534] The horns of antelopes, cows, and bulls, which are the Bambara trumpets, cease to roar, the drums stop booming, and a group of women (usually storytellers /griottes/, for they sniff out festivals and orgies with the scent of a vulture who smells carrion for 20 leagues) place themselves behind her and sing songs of love.

Preceded by a band of singers and a group of drums (2), the

[536]

2. This parade of the trousseau across the village only occurs at rich weddings when the trousseau is really worth the trouble. Most frequently only one exhibition takes place, the one in the evening.

file djiralaou (the women who show the gourds) have run through the village all morning, going from hut to hut to display the trousseau. That is not enough; under the eyes of the bride it is displayed again, exhibited one last time, and without fail the connoisseurs /213/ assess it and, without any embarrassment whatsoever, set an accurate value on it (1).

4: Henry--235 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

585

1. Sometimes this exhibition is made before the arrival of the young bride.

The shoes with soles three fingers thick, the white blouse and the loincloth that the bride wears, together with the koundougou fini, a huge piece of cloth that can yield three or four loincloths, are a gift from the husband; the rest -- cloth, gourds, pottery, mortars for grinding millet, cotton to be carded and spun, all come to her from her family. The size of the trousseau depends a little on the family's fortune, but as a general rule it can be stated that at her marriage every young woman receives some ten tafé (pieces of cloth, one and a half to two meters long by one meter wide, which the women wind around their bodies), some 15 gourds, and for ornaments at least a bracelet and a bead necklace (2). One is sometimes present at

[556 567]

2. Brides from rich families receive a slave called gouadani to do the cooking, as well as a cow, small chains for their feet, bracelets, a bead necklace with a piece of amber the size of a hen's egg, and two small gold earrings.

hilarious scenes, for among the crowd of the curious that press around, there are inevitably some rejected suitors. They have put aside hatred and rancour, for the boli of the village protects her. Yet they love her; deep in their hearts they keep all their love for her, and it is certainly they, the wounded ones, who take her free hand and pour onto her knees a few handfuls of cowrie shells.

When the vainglorious exhibition of the trousseau is finished, the fourouboloma tigi or the guardian of the wedding presents, gives the mistress of song 5 kémé, or 400 cowrie shells, and the guns are fired one last time. The young bride gets up at once, her platter of grass still over her face, and gliding with her heels on the ground, not lifting her feet, she goes into her dwelling followed by two or three matrons, and then she disappears in a light cloud of dust. The crowd withdraws, for to follow her or even to stay where they are would be indiscreet.

4: Henry--236 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Chapter 11

Bambara Burials

1. The Grave and the Cemetery

764 The Bambara bury their dead, and the graves they dig for them are about one meter fifty to one meter sixty in depth. They are two meters long, and two to three meters wide at the opening, and about one meter wide at the bottom. Three of the walls are shaped with a pick, so that there is a ledge of 0.10 to 0.50 meter above its greatest depth; the fourth wall, which rises in a gentle slope, is not shaped with a pick except at the level of the ledge left on the other three sides. A niche is dug the whole length of this wall to receive the corpse, so that the Negroes sleep their last sleep in a kind of little hut, the part dug in a gentle slope forming the roof. Men lie on their right sides with their heads to the south and their faces to the east; women lie on their left sides with their heads to the north and their feet to the south.

Some old men are buried in the inner courts of their dwellings. This custom is not at all widespread, and almost everywhere the cemetery is located around the village, and each one rests in his field of maize. The choice places are reserved for the heads of families and elders, however; the more authority they have and the greater /215/ their age, the nearer to the wall are their graves. Some villages have their cemeteries around the sacred grove which is reserved for the dasiri, genie protector of hamlets. The choice places are at the edge of the grove, and the priests of the fetish, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, are quite often buried on the near side of the grove, leaving the fetish tree between them and their subjects.

4: Henry--237 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

2. No Sacrifice to the Shades of the Dead

764 182 At every death the blood of hens, goats, and dogs flows in streams. I would like to be able to think and say with some Europeans that all these sacrifices are an honor paid to the shades of the deceased and the ancestors, but that is impossible for me. Not the slightest sacrifice is offered to a person's soul on the day of death or the day of burial. The Negroes are logical in their beliefs; the soul does not leave the body until after burial, and a dead person has no right to a sacrifice until he is in Lahara, or the world of spirits. Prayers are undoubtedly said. Objects which belonged to the deceased or were used in paying the final respects to him are destroyed and placed as saraka at the corner of land formed by paths that cross. But nothing in all this would be a sacrifice, bloody or bloodless in Bambara eyes (1).

[761]

1. Very rarely, a dead person is thought to have caused a Negro's death. If the sorcerer asserts that a deceased individual is the cause of a death, a sacrifice is made to him, but it is made to quiet him because he is a murderer, and not at all because he is dead.

764 182 761 And to whom are they directed, all these hecatombs and streams of blood? I already said, in the chapter where I discussed sickness and death, that a Bambara never dies a natural death. Always he is the victim of poison, of a gnâma or of a djiné, or -- 80 times out of 100 -- a powerful fetish, such as a Komo, Kono, Nama, Nia, or Douga, has caused him to perish. At every death one or another of the following expressions is on all lips: "Souba ta no do, that is the way the souba act"; -- "keroti kér'a la, the poison of the fetishes was thrown at him"; -- "dounkono dir'a ma, he has been given poison"; -- "Komo, Kono, or Nama, etc., sera a ma, the Komo, Kono, or /216/ Nama

764
762 has reached him"; -- "djinéou no do, the djiné are the cause of it";
761 -- "a fa gnâma do, it is his father's gnâma"; -- "boli y'a fa, a boli killed him."

Thus, all the sacrifices which are made on the occasion of a death are directed to the fetishes which are thought to be murderers, and if a deceased member of the family or of a family of strangers gets a slight trickle of blood, that is because on the word of a sorcerer he is guilty. When it is thought that the deceased was the victim of poured poison (dounkono) or korti (poison of the fetishes), thrown sorcery, there is recourse to the diviners and sorcerers to ascertain what invisible being must be soothed and what sacrifice should be uttered. If a gnâma is involved, a sacrifice to a fetish is often prescribed to ensure its protection, but to the gnâma itself a plain saraka, with or without bloodshed, is offered. These saraka are seldom made to the Supreme Being Alla; they are offered to the lesser djiné genii that run around the village and like to rest in the da-n-koun in among the gnâma.

3. Respects Paid to the Uncircumcised

766
[304] Few honors are rendered at death to the uncircumcised and unexcised; such persons are not really Bambara, for they lack the tribal mark. The head of the village and his council ascertain that the death has occurred and, depending on the order received from the diviners, a sacrifice is offered or a saraka placed. The people of the village come to offer their condolences to the bereaved family, and when the grave has been dug, two or three youths bury the corpse without further ceremony.

The father wears mourning for a whole day, and for at least three days the mother grieves in her hut with a few women friends, her neighbors. A barbaric custom also decrees that if the deceased is an unweaned infant its big toe must be broken, in the presence of its mother, and many fathers do more. They mark it with a knife on the forehead, the nape of the neck, the shoulders, the arms; they cut the upper lip or the lobe of an ear. This procedure always makes a deep impression on a mother, especially if she has given birth when

766 young, and since custom demands that she take advantage of her marriage without delay and conceive as soon as possible, she may give birth to an infant bearing a mark or /217/ the appearance of a mark made on the corpse of its older brother. Such an event contributes more than a little toward strengthening the Bambara belief in the reincarnation of souls. This belief is even one of the reasons why infants at the breast are buried in the inner court and sometimes in the mother's hut, and are very seldom taken to the cemetery (1).

[775]

1. The soul leaves the body after burial. The soul of a child must take on flesh again in the womb of its mother, and she must conceive as soon as possible. When an infant is buried in the court or the hut, its soul does not have to roam and cannot mistake the family.

764 The respects paid to the circumcised and the excised vary a little according to the age and status of the individuals; it might be said that there is no burial without some particular, characteristic little feature. To give as accurate an idea of the proceedings as possible, I have divided the burials into four categories: first, that of old people; second, that of heads of families; third, that of married persons; and fourth, that of the unmarried. After a word concerning the burial of pregnant women or those dying in childbirth, I will speak of the sacrifices made to the fetishes, of the respects paid to initiates of koré, or koté, and I will close this chapter with a description of the burial of the excommunicated and of the way the dead are worshipped.

764

4. Burials of the Circumcised, Old People, Heads of Families, Married and Unmarried Persons, Pregnant Women

Burials of the First Category, Those of Old People

[818] When I speak of old people I mean every Bambara (man or woman) who has grandchildren and so is a grandfather or grandmother. [224 575] When such an old person dies, gunpowder speaks and the shooting is even quite heavy if the deceased belongs to the association of hunters or there is an initiate of that sect (2) among his children. The chief

2. Hunters (douzo) all belong to a special sect. In order to enter it, a man must have passed his tests and killed a deer. The hunter has a special costume. See pp. 140 ff.

764 202 slave or, if there is none, a trusted man runs to notify the headman and his council, and all these dignitaries, spear in hand, come to verify the death and offer the /218/ first condolences to the family. Couriers at once go off in all directions to notify members of the family and friends. The person sent to married children is usually the one who was best man and sometimes the fourouboloma tigi (guardian of the wedding gifts) -- at the marriage. He carries out his mission with tact and delicacy. He first notifies the husband /of a daughter/ who summons his legal wife and orders her to go and take care of her father, who is seriously ill. So she leaves her house knowing nothing, and at least keeping a remnant of hope in her heart. It is only when she is on the way that she learns the sad news.

764 [819] While everyone is running right and left, the women wash the body with an aromatic plant called sou kola (1). They dress it in

1. Basil, a labiata, ocymum album and febrifugum.

764 white clothes or wrap it in a shroud, and when they have finished preparing it, they lay it in the middle of the dwelling on a coarse mat (called tjékala or sometimes kara) which is covered with a fine mat in which it will be wrapped to be carried to the grave. Many times, too, a heavy stone, used to grind sorghum, is laid on the abdomen of the corpse, doubtless to keep it from swelling. The women then cover themselves with white cloths, bed covers if nothing else is available; then they sit on their tiny stools and mourn and weep.

The eldest in the family, the new gouatigi (head of the family) also has much to do. /Note the assumption throughout that the old person deceased was also a family head. - Ed./ He consults the sorcerers, places saraka or has them placed, sacrifices, and he does not rest until the diviners have indicated to him the guilty one, the fetish who is the assassin. Dressed in white, he then goes to sit in the b'lon or at the door of the b'lon (the entry hut), and the headman and his council as well as neighbors and friends from the village and from neighboring villages come to pay their respects and express their sympathy.

All these people behave correctly; they talk in low tones and avoid laughter, and the monotony of the silence is broken by the cries of the women. As soon as they come in sight of the village, they throw white cloths over their heads and their cries grow ever louder until at last they are in the hut /219/ of the deceased. There they stop crying, dry their tears, and immediately begin to clap their hands, beat a gourd inverted in a conari full of water, and sing of the honors and achievements of the deceased.

[761] Indeed, there is nothing sad about the death of an old man; he has finished to the end the cycle of his existence, and it is in good taste to rejoice. The grandchildren of the deceased are full of joy, for their great-uncles and uncles give them a ba (800 cowrie shells); they are allowed to take a fat hen from the hen house (often even a billy or nanny goat from the grandfather's stable), and they are made [534] to dance to the sound of xylophones, drums, and triangles (kingé). This dance of the grandchildren is held before the first djansa (1).

1. A kind of alms given to the players of instruments and to the children.

764 during the night that precedes the burial in front of the corpse which is displayed in the court, and again during the night that follows the burial. The djansa is performed once in the morning and once in the afternoon for three days running. The members of the family, men and women, arrive in Indian file, singing in low tones; they form a ring and circle to the sound of the music. From time to time they throw out a few cowrie shells, and the children, who have come in large numbers for the occasion, scramble after them. On leaving, each places his offering on the ground near the chief musician.

At the cemetery near a fresh grave many feathers, a remnant of ashes, and a few small, carefully picked bones are to be seen. One imagines a sacrifice, but there has been none. The youths who dig the grave receive a hen in payment, and it is a gift from the deceased. For this reason, incidentally, it is given to them dead, after an old man has cracked its skull against the wall of the b'lon, or entry hut.

The grave is dug; the children of the deceased are all present (2), and he is about to be buried. The corpse is wrapped in a mat

> 2. All the children and grandchildren must be there, and in fact they all come unless it is absolutely impossible to do so. Except for a case of emergency, people sometimes wait one to three days to allow everyone to be present.

[343] and then laid under the goua, a coarse shelter that casts a little shade at the entrances of the dwellings, and through the mediation of the one in charge of the funeral ceremony, almost always a sorcerer, those present pay their respects /220/ to the deceased and offer him a few cowrie shells. Children and grandchildren, each in turn, accuse themselves of lack of consideration and respect in their conduct and ask pardon. Strangers also come and beg the deceased not to be angry, not to wish them ill, and all one hears is the voice of the herald crying: "Pardon, do not be angry, we loved you and respected you, be happy during your stay in Lahara (kingdom of invisible beings)."

764 This ceremony, as beautiful as it is touching, ends with this prayer: "Give us rain when winter comes, give us a plentiful harvest, a vigorous old age, children and wives, and give us prosperity." [463] Four strong fellows then come and take the corpse on their shoulders and, preceded by children and grandchildren who shout and cry, they carry it to the cemetery at almost a run, and the whole crowd follows them (1). The men line up around the grave, the women place themselves behind them, and the sons of the deceased go down into the grave. They undo the mat, take their father in their arms, and lay him in the niche on his right side, facing east. Then they tear a little of the shroud, or white blouse, of the buried man, and one of those present takes the strip torn off and holds it outside of the grave. [447] The children build an arch above the corpse out of small boards that are sometimes worked and colored, but most frequently out of wood chips (faléma) or large slabs of earth dried in the sun. While they are building, the youths mix mortar to stop up the cracks and thoroughly coat the whole structure. The women clap their hands and then sing in low tones to the sound of the drums.

1. In Bani country I have seen the spear of the deceased carried with great ceremony. The oldest son from time to time threw a few cowrie shells onto the corpse, and the crowd rushed to get them. This djansa is seldom performed, and the custom is not at all general.

764 782 When the work is done, the children come out of the grave, and the person in charge of the funeral ceremony comes forward, on his shoulder a hoe with the blade hafted in reverse and in his hand a gourd of water. He leans over the grave. The drums stop beating, the women are silent, and he pours water on the head of the buried man three times, saying: "See /221/ this water, do not be angry, forgive us, give us rain in winter and a plentiful harvest (1). Whether

764
782
[823]

1. In the eyes of the Negroes this ceremony is not a bloodless sacrifice but a simple prayer; and the water is poured to give the words greater emphasis, since in their eyes it is the element without which nothing lives nor can live.

the wind blows from the west or the east, from the north or the south, may it be favorable to us. Give us a long life, many descendants, wives and prosperity." The audience answers, "Amina -- o dé ka ké (let it be so)," and, using hoes hafted in reverse so that the curve of the blade is on the outside, the youths fill the grave. The drums beat again, and the women clap their hands and improvise a song whose words usually can be reduced to these: "Our father is dead, we have been told he is dead. But he will come back! Young men, fill the grave well, so that no souba, no hyena, nor any wild animal can take away the corpse."

764 When the grave is filled, the one who is holding the strip of cloth attached to the blouse, or the shroud, of the deceased pulls it toward him until it tears and remains in his hands. This ribbon is a [151] precious relic of which tafo are made; they are a protection from a host of evils, especially throat ailments and gnâma. The coarse mat (tjékala or kara) which was the bed or the seat of the deceased, quite often together with his shoes and the small earthen pot that was his wash basin, are laid on the tomb. If the deceased was a woman, pieces of a gourd, fragments of a hearth, or the stick for stirring gruel (to-n-galama) are thrown onto the tomb instead of the wash basin. The pliant mat in which the corpse was wrapped is often given to a friend. The latter goes and burns it outside the village, or before entering his own village if he is a foreigner; he says: "Here is a mat on which no one will die from now on."

[777] Wednesday and Saturday are two unlucky days. On these days 764 strangers never present their condolences to the bereaved family, and if a burial takes place, a small white chicken is killed and given to 782 the deceased so that he can placate the spirits as soon as the grave

764 has been filled and his soul goes to Lahara. In the eyes of the Negroes,
782 this act has none of the attributes of a sacrifice; it is the price of the right to enter Lahara and is given by the children to /222/ their father's soul. Moreover, they give it to him alive, and it is slipped into the grave at the moment when the last small board, the last wood chip, or the last earthen slab making up the root is set in place (1).

1. A nest egg is slipped in instead of a hen if the deceased was a woman.

764 At the end of the ceremony the deceased's dog is killed (2),

[231] 2. If the deceased owned a dog it is always killed unless the old man decided otherwise while he was alive. There are Bambara, especially women, who raise dogs in order to have this honor, and for this reason only.

and the sons-in-law and the brothers-in-law eat to, or millet gruel.
[431] When they depart they also receive a rooster or a hen. It is given them in the name of the deceased, and since it is the gift of a dead person, they kill and eat it on the way (3). The fetishes and the genii

[782] 3. This practice, again, is no sacrifice in the eyes of the Negro.

would be displeased if such a gift should arrive in the village alive, and whoever became guilty of such a crime would become the plaything of most of the gnâma and could dig his grave.

The Bambara do not place any kind of food either on or in the grave. But for three days in the evening, at nightfall, a dish of tô (gruel) and a little fresh water is placed on the gouâ so that the soul of the old man may satisfy his hunger and quench his thirst.

765 The great mourning lasts at least three days, and during all this time the people of the village rest (4). From all sides people come

4. For distinguished religious heads (gnéna-n-sonnaba), for example, there are often eight days of rest if the season permits. In the winter this is impossible because there is urgent work.

running in large numbers to be present at the djansa and to keep company with the new head of the family and this is understandable, for however little the family esteems itself, d'lo flows in streams, and [F73] the Negroes dread neither travel nor the sun when there is the prospect of gorging themselves with millet beer. At the end of the great mourning, the great sanga fo (5), there is a crowd at the home of the family

5. Sanga fo means "to go and give one's condolences to a family on the occasion of a death."

of the deceased, for all the friends are there to pay their respects for the last time to the departed old man and to install his successor. The women grind false-cedar bark, soak it in water, and spread it in the /223/ hut of the deceased. Armed with a broom of dry straw, they sweep from floor to roof, gather the dirt in a worn-out gourd and throw it all onto the da-n-koun (1) of the quarter. To do this they

1. Da-n-koun, corner of land formed by paths that cross, hence outside the village.

form a procession; an old hag marches in front, brandishing the broom, and, half dancing and half walking, they all shout:

"Fari ô, fari doun ka di

765 Malakou, salakou
Fari ô, fari doun ka di." (2)

2. A song heard in Bani country. Since these songs are often improvised, they differ from one region to another.

Translation: "Ah! how pleasant it is to eat mashed beans (fari) and to eat all one's fill, ah! how pleasant it is to eat mashed beans!"

The excised daughters and grandaughters of the deceased wear mourning for about eight to ten days. During this time they stay in the b'lon, or entry hut, and spin cotton. The only noteworthy fact [513 514] is that they all sleep in the same hut and attend to the wants of nature at set times, going to the bush evening and morning in Indian file with white veils on their heads. For the whole moon following the [293] death, the wife (the wives if the old man was polygamous) of the deceased wear sandals of goatskin and go out dressed only in white.

At the end of the moon, the wives of the deceased become the 78 property of the head of the family, who makes them his own or gives 562 them to his circumcised children (3). Some freedom is left to them, 428

3. Brothers succeed brothers. If there are no brothers, the oldest son inherits. If the deceased is younger than the brother who inherits, the latter possesses the wives but may not enjoy them. If the heir is the son of the deceased, all the father's or grandfather's wives belong to him, and he may enjoy them all except his mother.

for they can ransom themselves if they wish, and for the old and worn, difficulties are soon smoothed away. If the new family head is without a brother and without children or if he is older than the deceased,

764 slipped into the grave.

Burials of the Third Category, Those of Married Persons Who are not Heads of Families

The death of married persons who do not have the honor of being gouatigi, or head of a family, is not announced by a gunshot unless they belong to the sect of hunters. For them there is no arch of small boards, chips of wood, or dried bricks; a few tree branches are thrown onto the corpse, and the grave is completed. At the removal of the body the prayer is recited, but no one offers cowrie shells and there is no djansa (2). Depending on their sex, they receive a white hen

> 2. I have seen the djansa held even for young men who were circumcised and not married, but these were exceptions and did not reflect a general practice.

or an egg, if the burial /225/ takes place on a Saturday or a Wednesday or if they die without a child, and their dog, faithful companion in travels in the bush, is not killed (1).

> 1. It is not a general practice to offer gruel, or to.

Burials of the Fourth Category, Those of the Unmarried

Circumcised men and excised women who are unmarried are offered primarily tears. They have not completed the cycle of their existence, they have hardly begun, and at the death of one of them the whole village is in consternation. The gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, (the religious head), offers his condolences and withdraws into his hut; he does not appear at any of the funeral ceremonies.

4: Henry--250 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

764 There is seldom a djansa for unmarried persons, and the corpse lying in the grave does not even get branches to protect it from the earth with which it is covered. Not having had children, the young man receives his live hen and the girl her egg.

Burials of Women Who Were Pregnant or Died in Childbirth

766 The death of a woman during pregnancy or while giving birth
845 to her child stirs the whole female population. To appease the spirits, drive away the gnâma, and protect the village from another misfortune of this kind, all the excised women go to cut branches of karité (Bassia parkii) or dogora. As soon as the deceased is carried to the grave, they burst out of the village, crying and weeping. Three times they go back toward the village, waving their branches, and call out "hou" three times in shouts that disturb and chill you.

At the edge of the grave, or most often in the grave itself, a
[526] blacksmith -- the surgeon of the occasion -- removes the child, tells its sex, and lays it near the mother (2). During the operation the

2. If the deceased has already been delivered, the stillborn child is wrapped in the mother's mat. The operation is performed for one who has not been delivered, less to save the child's life than to spare the deceased the disgrace of the egg. A newborn child deprived of its mother is condemned to death. It is not strangled, of course, but no woman wants to give it her breast, and the little thing dies of hunger. If a woman were to nurse it out of compassion, the spirits and gnâma would take revenge by

766
845
847

766
845
847

causing her own child to die. A mother who has lost her child may adopt an orphan and give it her breast.

766 crowd /226/ always withdraws, and the blacksmith remains alone
845 with his assistant. When the work is done, they wash their hands on the grave itself, and the operator makes the customary prayer: "Whether the wind comes from the east or the west, from the north or the south, etc.," (see above, p. 244).

5. Sacrifices to Fetishes on the Occasion of a Death

782 Although at the time of death there is no sacrifice to the soul
784 of the deceased nor to the shades of ancestors, blood flows nevertheless.
788 It even flows in torrents for the Bambara are not satisfied with reddening the family boli; they stain with blood all the boli fetishes they believe to be guilty. Nor do initiates of the sects forget their deceased brothers, and for a friend who was initiated the same day as they themselves, they cannot refuse the boli a hen and a kola nut. If the deceased is the master of a fetish, its priest, or an influential person on its staff, all the initiates comply, and the sacrifice becomes general. The initiates do more; in the evening they take the god out of its temple, and all night long they mingle their wild animal shouts with the blasts of sacred horns and trumpets blown by heralds. The latter very often wear hideous horned masks on their heads and are dressed in cloaks of feathers.

761 Eighty times out of a hundred, death is attributed to a powerful
782 boli which is taking vengeance, punishing or rewarding, and in the
784 environs of Ségou the Komo, Nia, Kono, Nama, and Douga are the
788 ones who have the most deaths to their credit. When the murdering boli is known, the entire village is notified; the trousers, blouse and bed cover of the deceased, or the tafé (1) if it is a woman, are hung

1. Tafé: a rectangular piece of cloth which women wind around their bodies to cover themselves.

761 on the branches of the sacred tree under which the fetish dwells and
782 at the door of its temple, and the members of its staff know how to
764 extol their god. Under these conditions they are without pity; they
778 bleed the bereaved family white, so that the tax demanded by our circle officers (2) is nothing compared to the tax that they have to

[651]

2. The head tax is 3.50 francs per person and 5 francs for the servants of Europeans. Here France is surely not a "tyrant," but a tender mother.

pay. /227/

782 What do they not have to give for a sacrifice to the Komo, for
764 example? The whole house is turned upside down to find goats, dogs,
[824] kola nuts, roosters, and hens, gnâma-n-kou (Amormum melegueta), and djalakouma (a plant whose name I do not know). The family needs all this, cost what it may, and if they have to buy it all they have to pay double or triple the value of the objects, for others make profits from their necessity. First a dog or a goat is sacrificed to appease the fetish and pay respects to it. Then to find out whether it is satisfied and its hatred assuaged, two red roosters and two hens with golden necks bite the dust. A bara (1) (gourd) full of gnâma-n-

[415 824]

1. This bara (a large pumpkin /courge/ with a small opening at the top) can hold from 18 to 20 liters of liquid. The true gourd is half of a pumpkin.

kou fruit and another full of djalakouma are offered. One portion of these fruits is used for holy water (2); the other is sold for the benefit

782 764 824

2. The holy water of the Komo is made of roots and leaves of the djalakouma and the fruit of the

780
764
824

gnâma-n-kou or the na-yanka (I do not know the name of this plant), put to boil and soak in water. To make it effective, at least two kola nuts are offered to the fetish and five hens are sacrificed to it.

782
764

of the staff, which lives off the altar. For the mere act of having killed a dog or a goat, of which they receive a good share of the meat, they get a fee consisting of a basket of sorghum (18 to 20 kilograms) and 1, 600 cowrie shells (about 2 francs).

Since initiates of the fetish are the only ones who can touch the corpse and lay it in its final home, they receive 8, 000 to 10, 000 cowrie shells (about 8 to 10 francs) on that score. At the end of the sangafo (3) the god's retinue go and sweep the hut of the deceased,

3. Sangafo, to go and offer condolences to the relatives of a deceased."

purify it with holy water, and drive out the last gnâma of the murdering Komo, and for this five fine hens are slaughtered. As payment for their trouble, the family also gives them five to six meters of cloth and 8 to 10 ba (4) (about 8 to 10 francs); 50 francs do not cover

[802]

4. A ba is worth 800 cowrie shells or about 1 franc. (The Bambara count by 40 and 80, and not by 50 and 100. 40, débé; 80, kémé.)

the cost.

Fortunately, the family does not bear all the expenses. Friends [43] help a little, and everyone brings his offering: from one person they get a /228/ hen, from another a débé (40 cowrie shells) or a kémé (80 cowrie shells). Nevertheless, they bear most of the cost, and [824] the fetishes are one of the chief reasons for that bonding of children (1)

4: Henry--254 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

782
764
426
567
357
858

1. A bonded person works for his food, just like a slave. His condition is worse than that of the slave, for in addition to his food, the latter receives a bit of cloth to cover himself, but the bonded person does not. A slave can ransom himself for a sum varying between 100 and 200 francs, and at present he can escape without fear of being pursued and without paying anything at all. A bonded person must pay the amount of his bond to the last cowrie shell, whether he escapes or not. There are Negroes who, for a certain amount, will give you one of their children for one or two years. These children are not paid since the amount has already been paid, but besides food they get clothing and some gratuities beyond the payment for their work. Lacking the proper words, the Bambara call this also, "bonding" even though it is basically a real "domestic service." When the agreed time has passed, these young people go back to their homes without any payment being made. Even though the Negroes call this bonding, they make a distinction: a) slavery is a stigma which always remains; b) true bonding is a stigma that does not disappear unless the bonded person himself pays the price of his bonding; c) the bonding which is called "domestic service" does not involve any stigma; they are workers and not menial laborers.

764 782 which is nothing less than disguised slavery. In the presence of a European the Negroes like to complain that he cannot meet their taxes, but they should not be listened to too closely -- 99 times out of 100 they are lying! Let us not make war against the military or civil official responsible for levying the tax, which is not at all exorbitant; let us think before all about the boli and their staffs, a band of persons without principles or law, human vultures with greedy fingers who attack the weak, the widows and orphans, terrify them with their threats of death. They do not leave these people in peace until they have taken everything: hens, goats, dogs, cowrie shells, sorghum, and often freedom.

6. Respects Paid to Initiates of the Koré, or Koté

794 766 The initiates of a fetish are never indifferent to the death of a brother, and they hasten to find a hen and a kola nut with which to prove their attachment to the deceased and to assuage the wrath of the god. The sect of koré does things in a grand, even in a ceremonious, manner, if there is any ceremony in those nocturnal orgies where d'lo, or millet beer, is drunk to /229/ the point of senselessness, and where lascivious and obscene dances are danced.

When a young man who is koré dé (son of koré, initiate of the [778] sect) dies, relatives and friends redden with blood the sacred tree and the kara, a perforated board painted red and white, which is the genie's emblem. Although there is general mourning in the village, tears are dried when evening comes, and for three nights there is nameless [785] bedlam and endless shouting in the kore tou (the sacred grove) as initiates flagellate themselves, burn their backs with torches, tear their bodies with thorns, abandon themselves to their barbaric dances, [534] and lose themselves in lewd gestures in front of the dénouba (drums measuring from one to one and a half meters) and the kingé (a triangle, an iron tube, which is hung from the thumb of the left hand and which is struck with a ring or an iron nail placed on the little finger).

For the old people who are granted not a tear nor a regret but for whom there are dances and songs, fellow initiates come in large numbers, and during the night preceding the burial, they make a

794 766 bedlam and racket in front of the corpse, which is displayed under the great trees that shade the entrance of the village. That is a most lugubrious and macabre rite! After the burial for three successive nights, the same respects are paid to the deceased in front of the fetish tree in the koré tou (sacred grove), and if the deceased was a koré tigi (head of the sect of koré), a gnéna-n-sonnaba (head of the village and priest of the dasiri), a bolitigi (master of a boli), a flélikéla (famous sorcerer), a gouatigi (family head), a souroukou tigi or a korodouga tigi (head of a group in the sect (1)), they often continue

1. See my chapter on the koré, or koté.

their orgies for eight days running, gorging themselves with d'lo (beer), and getting drunk.

794 769 The anniversaries of the old people, those who had fame, authority, and especially authority in the sect, are observed regularly every year, and on that day there is a memorial to members of the family who belonged to the sect. Youths in large numbers come from all directions to abandon themselves to barbaric dances, and since beer flows in streams, the drinking bout that takes place is indescribable. /230/ Only a family reduced to the blackest poverty would neglect to offer d'lo (millet beer).

794 769 185 On the morning that follows these dances in honor of a deceased koré dé, a saraka is placed with great ceremony at the dankoun ba (1)

1. Dankoun, a corner of land formed by two paths that cross; dankoun ba, "great dankoun," the dankoun most popular in the village.

of the village. It consists of the remains of the torches of the tatougoula (2), the bent, broken, and unraveled whips of the bisatjila

2. Tatougoula, those who dance with fire.

(3), the thorn brooms of the woni sama (4), and finally the leafy branch

794
769
785

3. Bisatjila, those who flagellate themselves.

4. Woni sama, those who scratch themselves with thorns.

used by the korodouga (5) to drive away the sparks crackling on the

5. Korodouga, clowns, storytellers /griots/ of the sect.

backs of the tatougoula.

7. Burial of the Excommunicated

766 Those with sores, lepers, and persons killed by a fetish who did not accept their sacrifice may be said to be excommunicated. No adult who dies without hair on his head or body has the right to the honor of a Bambara burial, and he is given that of lepers.

A leper is never buried in the common cemetery; he is sent far off into the bush to a separate place. The more usual custom, actually, is to slip the corpse into a hollow baobab (Adansonia digitata) with a small, live pullet as companion -- or an egg, if the deceased is a girl. The same fate befalls a bald person.

The reason for this custom is that this class of people have been abandoned by the Creator and the spirits, all of whom scorn them and withdraw from them. If ever the ground where ancestors rest should receive the remains of one of these accursed ones, their bones would shake with disgust. Moreover, they would take revenge for having to rest near people who during their lifetime were without hair; they would be deaf to every prayer and would refuse every sacrifice. The village and the entire region there would suffer a total lack of rain, a drought without any equal, in short, a famine with all its horrors. /231/

766 The victim of a boli may also become for the village and the region an impure, base creature that has lived all too long. This happens when the murdering, or supposedly murdering, fetish three times refuses the sacrifices offered to appease it (1). When this occurs

[782]

1. A sacrifice is not accepted if the hen charged with giving the god's answer dies on its breast with its feet under it, and the kola nut, cut in two, falls on its pulp with the rounded part on top.

the whole family, men, women and children, must still their cries and must not weep, however great their sorrow may be. Family heads abandon themselves to sacrifices, the initiates of the sect do the same, and everybody thanks the boli for having caused the death of a person who deserved only scorn and should never have lived, and begs never to meet such a fate nor to be like him.

766 794 When the grave has been dug (a plain grave without a niche), the men of the murdering boli (2) come and wrap the corpse in a mat.

2. When a boli has killed someone, it is the men of that boli who come to bury him. It is not always a boli of the village, but sometimes from a distance of one, two, or three days' journey, and if the men of that fetish cannot come at once, e. g., if they are elsewhere burying a man killed by the god, people close the door of the hut in which the corpse lies and wait until the gravediggers choose to arrive. I saw the corpse of a blacksmith left like this for four full days. The sorcerers are the ones who name the boli and the village where it is.

766 When they have sewed and tied it well, they take it on their shoulders
794 and head on the double for the exit door. There they stop and without any respect roughly set the body down. Armed with picks they make an opening in the wall of the hut and, seizing the corpse by the feet, they drag it and put it into this opening. Strong hands seize it from the outside, they pull and the others push, and the excommunicated one comes out of his dwelling and appears in the alley or on the square.
[482] Four fellows -- sons of the fetish, for they alone are present at these burials -- take him on their shoulders and, running, carry him to the cemetery. At the edge of the grave they put down their load, the initiates give a loud cry, a sort of roar, and they roll him with their feet into his final home. For such people there is not the slightest farewell or prayer, and the grave is filled at once.

In the evening the fetish is brought out, and the initiates abandon
[789] themselves to their sacred dances, while the god, in the hands of its priests, /232/ runs about the village and its environs, exorcising. All night long nothing is heard but the bellowing of horns and trumpets and sacred hymns shouted by the crowd, and from a distance one would say they were dull rumblings or the actual cries of wild animals.

8. Worship accorded to the Dead

769 At the death of a Bambara not the slightest sacrifice is directed either to him or to the deceased of the family. However, the worship of the dead is prevalent among the Bambara, althought it cannot be compared to the worship of the genii, especially of the boli. Nevertheless, everyday one can see, at the door of one family or another, a large splash of blood on the wall about a meter from the ground, a brownish octopus one might say, throwing its twisted arms here and there and struggling against a clump of feathers stuck on its back with the juice of a chewed kola nut. Some people have seen in this worship the basis of the Negro religion and, no doubt because they did not know the language and have been unable to give an exact meaning to the words caught by their ears, they have portrayed the Bambara with knife always in hand, ready to slaughter in honor of his relatives. Because they group together all saraka and sacrifices,

769 and do not know the ways and customs of the country, they take for sacrifices to the shades of the ancestors, the sacrifices which are made to the gnéna, or djiné, genii and to the gnâ, or boli, genii.

769 554 Thus, worship of the dead does not have all the scope that people sometimes choose to attribute to it. Moreover, the Bambara revere only those dead who had a little authority on this earth, such as the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or the dougoutigi (village heads, priests of the dasiri), the sotigi (heads of quarters), and the gouatigi (1) (heads

1. The gouatigi, head of the family, is called fa, "father." This word "father" should be taken in a broad sense, for to much of the family the gouatigi is a grandfather, a brother, or an uncle. Making a sacrifice to the fa sou (fa, "father"; sou, "corpse") does not mean sacrificing to the father who begot you, to the father of the family, to the one who bore the title of gouatigi. The chief wife of a gnéna-n-sonnaba, sotigi, and gouatigi, like her husband, receives a share of the sacrifice.

of families), and this reverence is given less to the individuals themselves than to the authority they had. /233/

769 The first sacrifice to an ancestor who was a headman is made a year after his death and at the second big festival that follows his death. In order for him to be entitled to a trickle of blood, the sangafo (1) must have been completed, and it ends at the first festival

1. Sangafo, "to offer condolences on the occasion of a death."

held at the end of the sounkalo (soun, "fast"; kalo, "month"), or Ramadan (2).

769
796
797

2. The Negroes' great festival is held at the end of Ramadan. They have a second at the festival of the كَبَنَن sheep. The Moslem masters forced them to observe these two festivals, but the Bambara have not adopted a single Moslem rite. They sacrifice to the dasiri, to some djiné genii, and to the dead.

769
782

The great sacrifice to the dead is made at the end of Ramadan and at the festival of the كَبَنَن sheep. The gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, first sacrifices to the b'lon da ba sou (3), those who,

3. Sou, "corpses"; b'lon da ba, "of the great b'lon," the great entry hut giving access to the village.

like themselves, were priests of the dasiri and, in a general way, to all those who had some civil or religious authority in the village. All the members of his council are present at this sacrifice. After the libations of millet flour mixed with water and d'lo, or millet beer, a fine white hen (4) is slaughtered, and sometimes a sheep then, two

[822]

4. In general sacrifices where the whole population or a whole sect participates, the liturgical color is the primary consideration, and a pullet a day old has as much value as a large rooster. When a victim of the liturgical color cannot be obtained, only water, dégé, and the kola nut are offered.

white kola nuts are offered and, if the sacrifice is accepted, a clump of wool or a few feathers are torn from the victim and stuck onto the

769 middle of the splash of blood by means of a bit of chewed kola nut.
782 When the general sacrifice has been made, every member of the council offers his white hen and his kola nut.

When the village has paid its respects to the blonda ba sou, the sotigi (heads of quarters) gather the gouatigi (heads of families) under their jurisdiction, and all these people sacrifice as before to the shades of those who were heads of quarters (5). Each family head

5. Only hens are slaughtered. There are always libations of dégé (millet flour mixed with water) and of d'lo (beer), and offerings of kola nuts.

then goes back to his home, gathers his children, and sacrifices to the shades of his fathers, to those who, like him, were heads of the family. /234/

The Bambara sacrifice to their ancestors very often; they do so by order of a sorcerer and on any occasions in their lives that are at all important, such as the circumcision or excision of one of their children, a betrothal or a wedding (1), but they do so especially when

1. Many Bambara do not sacrifice even on these occasions (circumcision, wedding, betrothal) but prefer to call on the family boli, which they dread more. In the winter everybody sacrifices to the shades of ancestors.

winter comes and the fields are sown. The sacrifices are simple and individual, and only the people of the house are present; just a hen, with a little dégé and a kola nut, comprise the whole expense.

The formula of the sacrifice has no special characteristics. The same ideas are always repeated: "I offer this dégé, this d'lo, and this hen; it is a sacrifice that I make to you in my name and in the name of my children. Preserve us from the souba, from sorcery, and from evil-doers. Favor us, preserve us from sickness, give us wives and healthy children, cause us to have rain in the winter, health to work our fields, and a fine harvest."

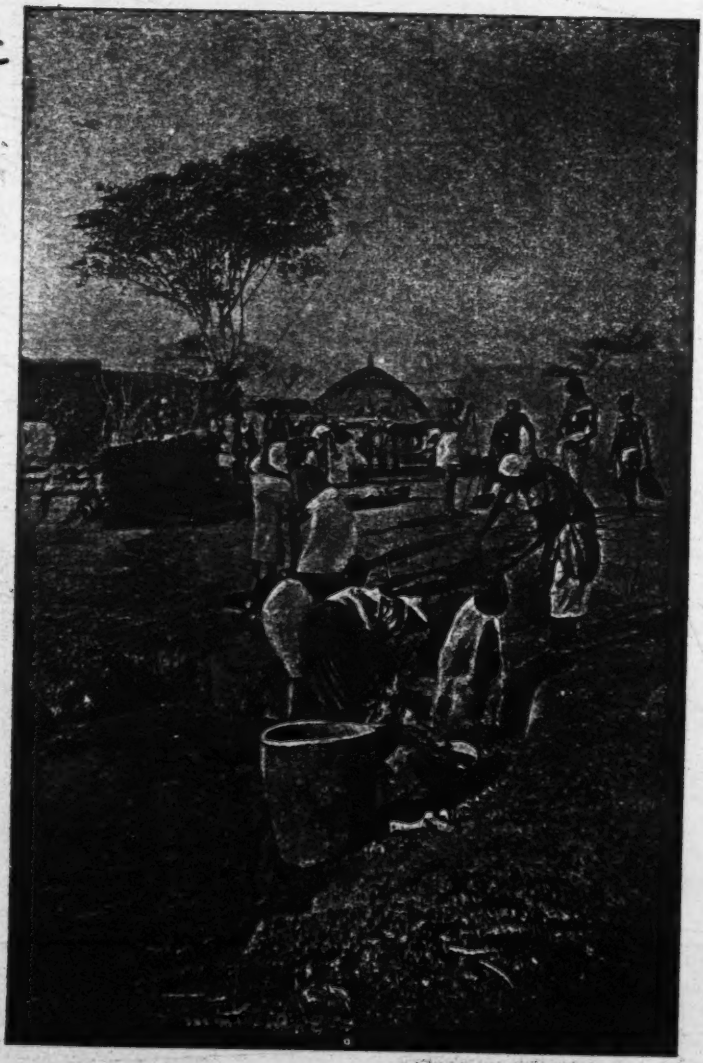
4: Henry--263 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

769
782
778

The sacrifice to the dead is most often made on the doorsill of the entry hut, and a splash of blood is spread on the wall on each side of the door, about a meter and half from the ground. Many families also have an altar for sacrificing to the dead in their main b'lon; it is the kârâ, an earthen bas-relief depicting a man and a woman. It is all crudely made and has no human qualities about it. Nevertheless, one can guess what the Negroes wanted to depict, for although the woman is without mouth, ears, nose, or eyes, just like her mate, she is always adorned with two fine breasts.

4: Henry--264 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

312
415
291



At the edge of the well, in Bambara country.

4: Henry--265 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

415
516
296

The Ségou bank of the Niger.

4: Henry--266 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Wedding procession of the caterpillars at Banankourou in July, 1908.

778

A fetish in the bush; the dwelling of a djiné genie (near Bamako).

346
534
535
292
794

Sacred dance in honor of the N'tomo, the children's fetish.
/sub-caption: The hut with a conical roof, on the right, is the temple of the boli fetish Nia./

4: Henry--268 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

4: Henry--269 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

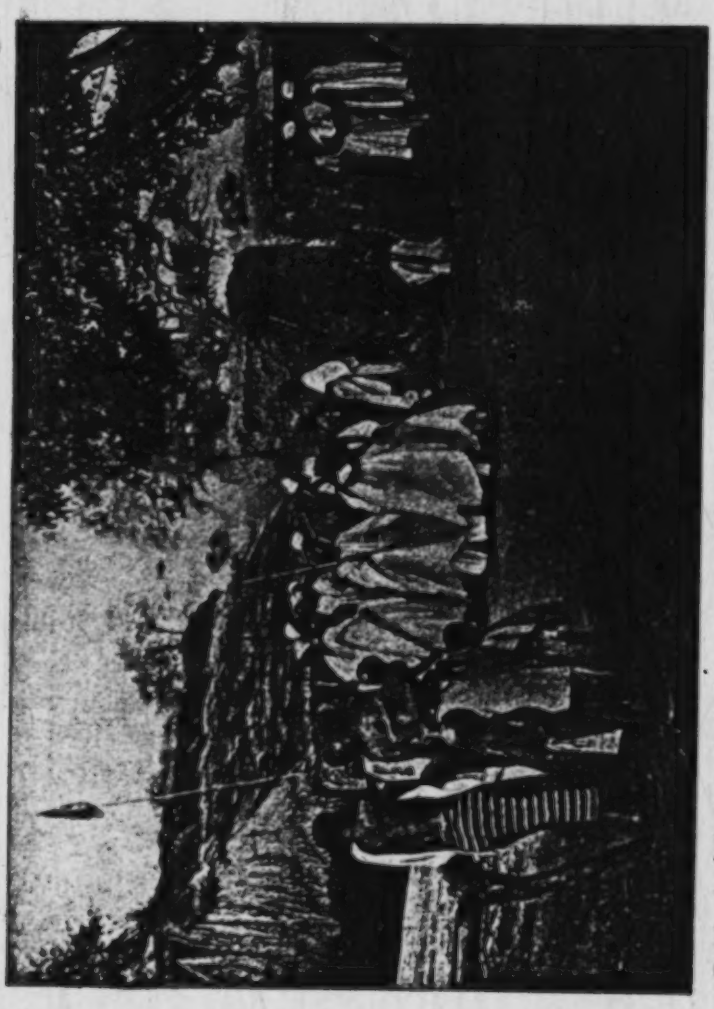
796
785

Festival of the N'tomo.
Flagellation of children.

Above: Festival of N'tomo.
Before the flagellation.

4: Henry--270 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

796
291



Festival of the N'golo fetish: An outing of the to-n-de, of the association of the fla-n-to.

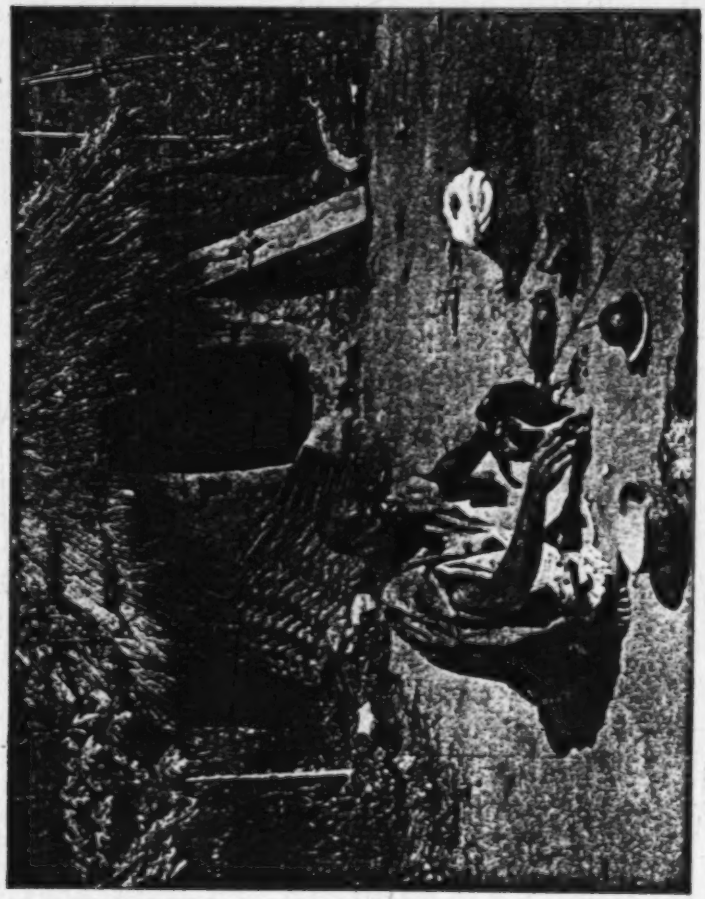
SCS
778
S34
292
S76

4: Henry--271 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Left: Souba (monkey), society of the Koré. Above: Denouba (the big drum) and kinge (a triangle), society of the Koré. Center: Head korodouga and his herald, society of the Koré. Right: Souroukou (hyena), society of the Koré.

4: Henry--272 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

516
782
415



Sacrifice of a hen to the "family boli."

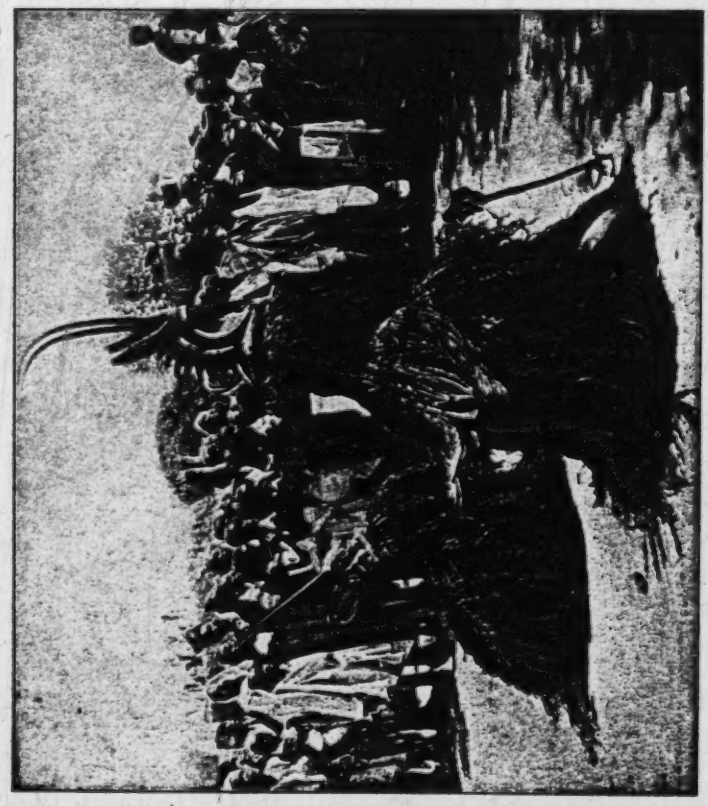
796
291

Procession of the Tji wara: the young people meet at the field to work under the eyes of two companions dressed in the insignia of the fetish of work.

4: Henry--273 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

4: Henry--274 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

796
778



Sacred dance in honor of the Tji wara fetish, the genie of work.

718
346

4: Henry-275 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Sacred dance of the mourou kalatigi (sacrificer) after a sacrifice accepted by the boli M'bie Djougou at Talakala.

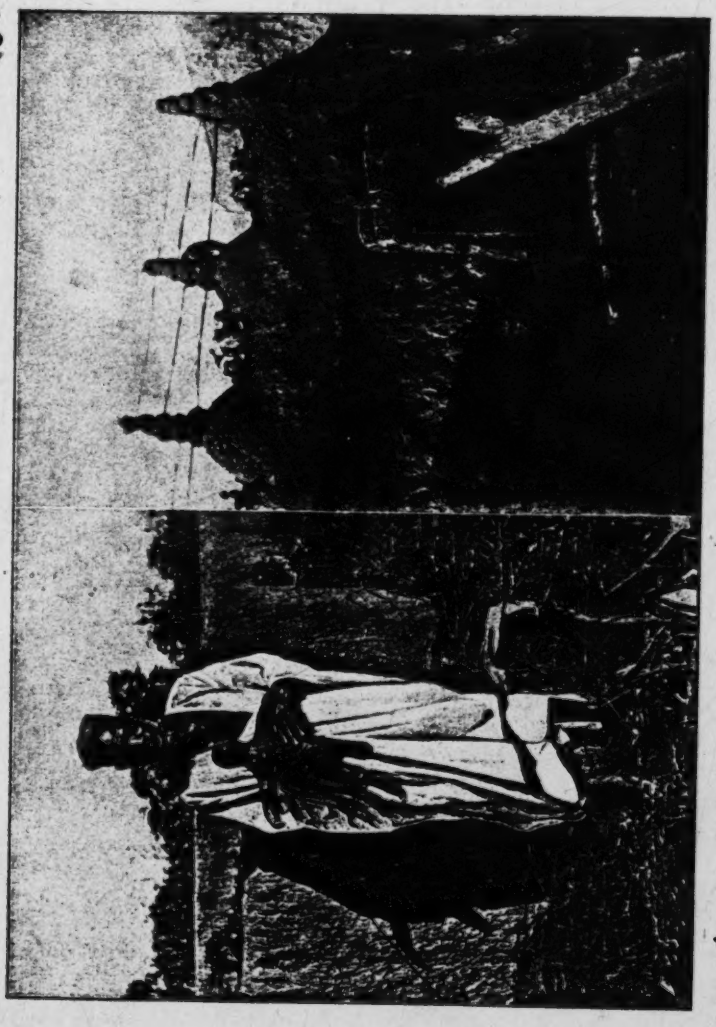
Mask of the boli fetish Komo.

Temple of Nia, a powerful boli.

Above: Pillar of the Magnan, a powerful boli fetish.

4: Henry--276 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

346
778



Zanké and the boli fetish, Kono.

Temple of the Kono fetish.

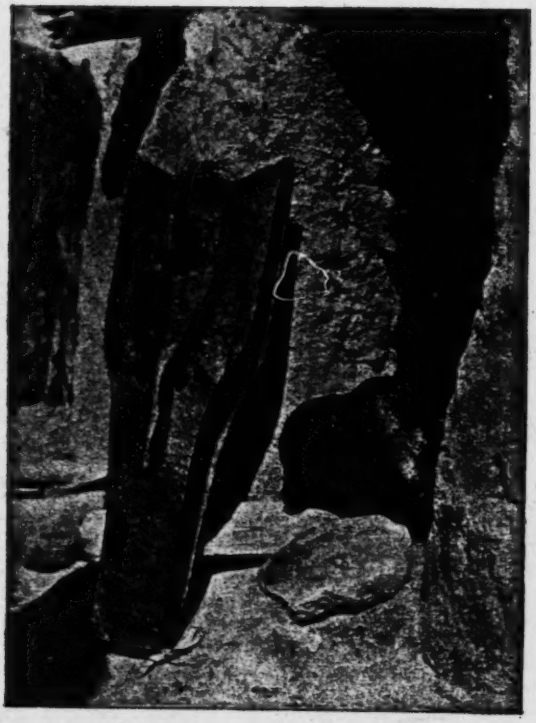
4: Henry--277 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910
FA8 Bambara FA8

718

The Nama fetish.

1 4: Henry--278 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910
FA8 Bambara FA8

778



A boli fetish in the shape of a hippopotamus, with the mask worn during the sacred dance.

4: Henry--279 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

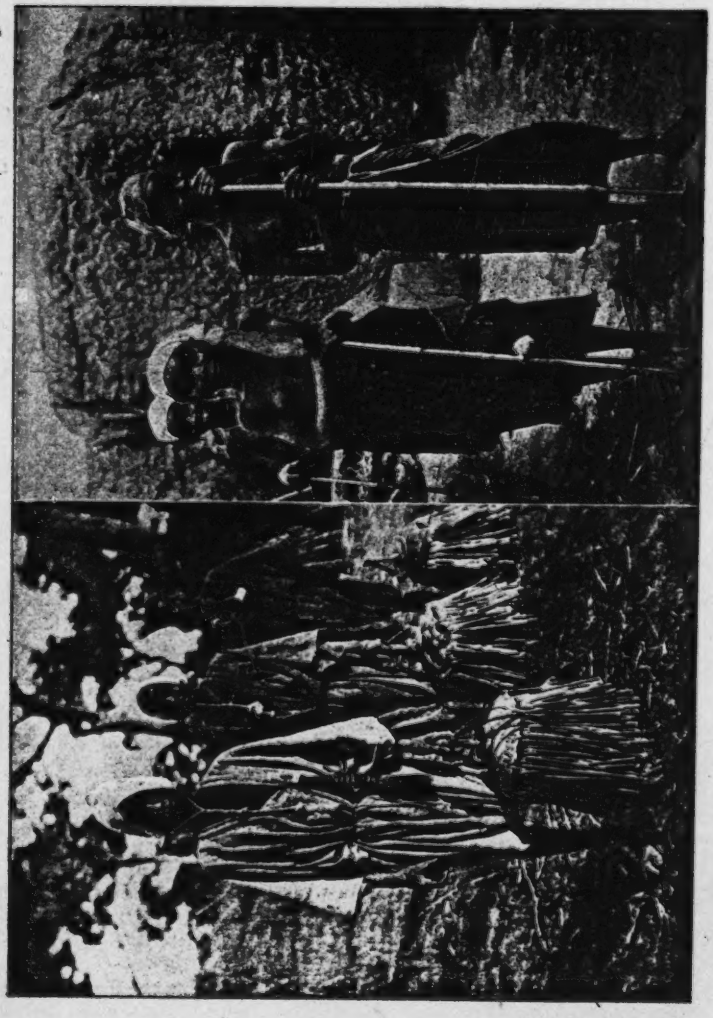
142
291
304
381

Tattoo worn by the women of Bani country.

Tattoo worn around the breasts by young girls of Ségou and made by themselves.

4: Henry--280 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

292
293



Excised Bambara girls.

Circumcised Bambara youths.

4: Henry--281 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

291
301

Young Bambara girls dressed to go out.

292

Circumcised youth dressed up.

292
301
142

4:- Henry--282 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Excised girl in the dress-up attire of Bani country.

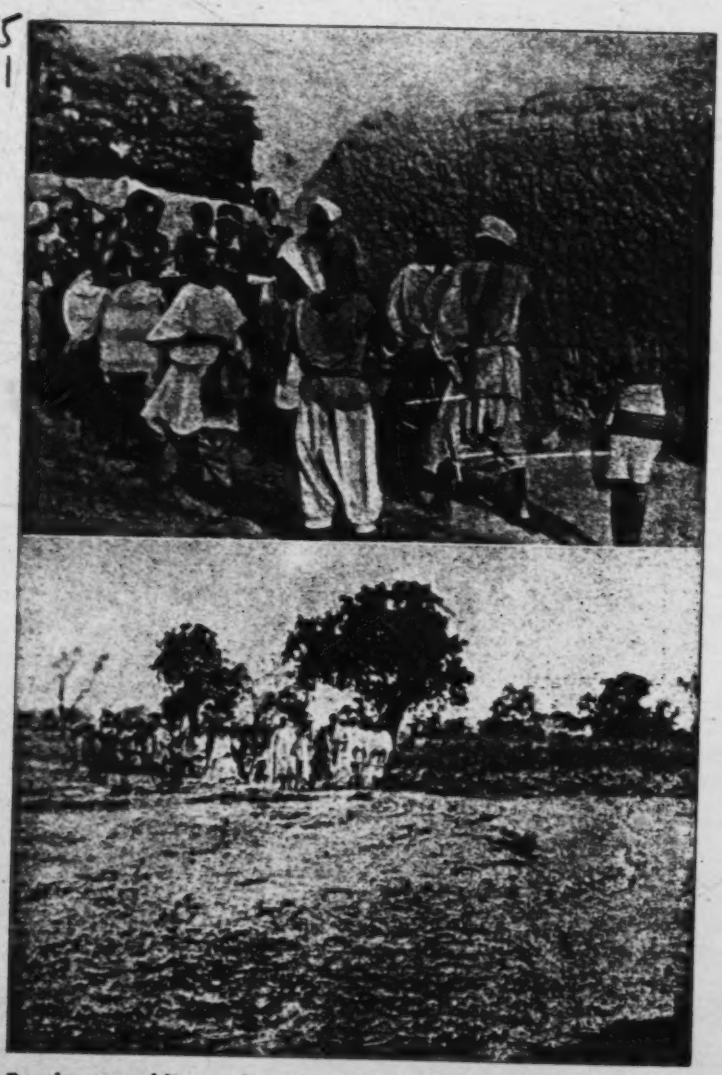
Excised girl dressed up.

4: Henry--283 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Bambara wedding.
The meal is carried to the young bride and her maids of honor (at Moundjirila).

4: Henry--284 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

585
291



Bambara wedding: the guests go to thank the young bride after the meal. Above: Bambara wedding: procession of a young bride going to the home of her groom.

4: Henry--285 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

764
291

Bambara burial.
The corpse being laid in the grave.

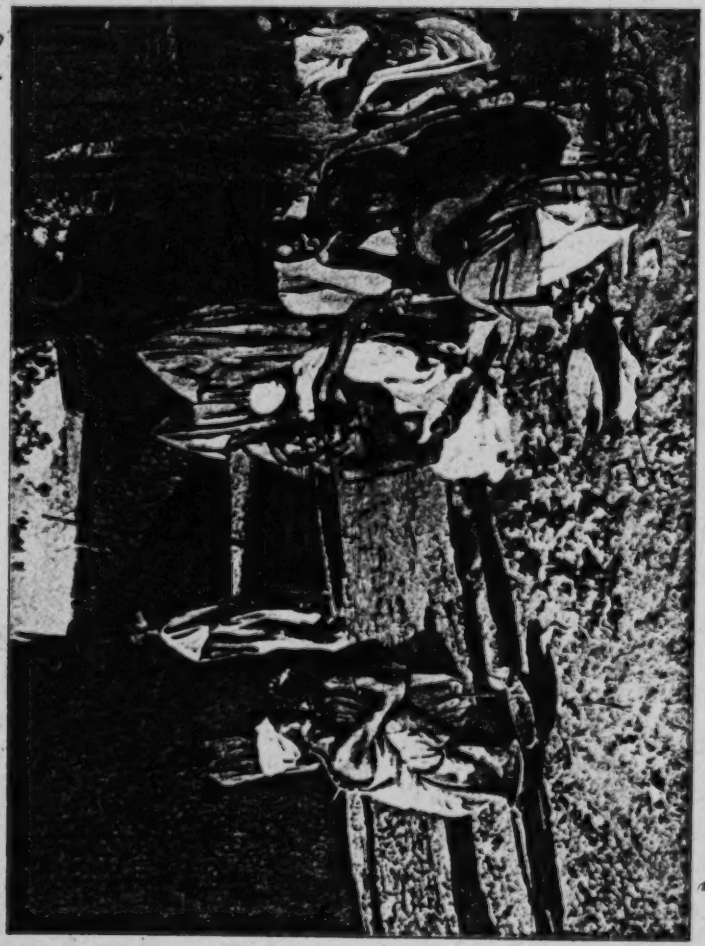
4: Henry--286 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

764
782

Bambara burial.

4: Henry--287 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

516
782



After the sacrifice: division of the sacred meats.